■ Saturday Special
Furor over Oscar snub of Mel Gibson's 'Passion of the Christ'

■ Opinion / A14
Congressmen's plans A, B busted; congrats, Senate

■ Metro
Prosecutors blunder at Roldan et al. preliminary probe

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Martha Stewart goes home after serving jail term

Tanong ng Bayan / A22
Dapat bang mag-retiro na ang Santo Papa?

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Assumption honors PDI Chair Marixi Prieto

THE PHILIPPINE Daily Inquirer's Chairman of the Board Marixi Rufino Prieto has been tabbed by Assumption College one of three outstanding alumnae, together with Sonia Roco Pupa Dehlinger and the

House moves to stop word war with Senate

By Michael Lim Ubac and Jaime Laboy-Jardeleza

MEMBERS of the House minority tried to douse the fires of battle over the embattled pork barrel allocations in the 2005 P1.126-billion national budget passed Thursday night.

"We want a step to decrease] tension [in the

Saturday, March 5, 2005 | 48 pages | vol. 20 | no. 67 | website: www.inq7.net

Oil price hikes more often

Energy department warns consumers

By Abigail L. Ho

WITH world oil prices surging to unprecedented levels the past week, the energy department has warned motorists and consumers to brace themselves for much more frequent increases in petroleum pump prices.

Energy Undersecretary Jesus Anthony Abaya said international prices had been on an upward trend the past few days, with prices rising to record levels almost overnight every single day.

"Oil has risen to record levels once again overnight. Dated spot price is now at more than $60 a barrel. The February average was $55," Abaya said in a text message yesterday.

Even in these prices, he demand for oil continues to grow, the official noted, and assured that if the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries were to adjust upward the price band for its basket of crude—from the current between $22 and $28 per barrel—domestic pump prices could go higher up.

"The level of industry and the public [at] is ready to accept [even] new price levels. Right now, the local market is starting to reflect the latest oil price surge already," he said.

The regional benchmark Dubai crude surged to a spot price of $53.90 a barrel on March 3, closing up the March average to $45.36 a barrel. The February average was only $39.87 a barrel.

The price of unleaded gasoline based on the Mean of Platts Singapore (MOPS) benchmark for refined petroleum products also climbed to a March average of $57.60 a barrel, with the March 3 spot price standing to $58.89 a barrel.

MOPS-based gasoline averaged only $54.27 a barrel last month.

Eclipsing all records, MOPS-based diesel surged to a March average of $65.52 a barrel, almost $10 higher than the

ACCUSERS AND A SUSPECT. During the preliminary investigation on Friday of the eight suspects in the kidnapping of a 1-year-old boy, his parents, Roger and Jenny Ye (at right) are accusing those who snatch-grasped prosecutors brought the persons at the DOJ. All of the accused, except for Dawnes Roldan, have yet to be formally charged in court. (At left) One of the suspects, Susana Wong, during an interview, snaps "Nothing like that happened." (Story on Page A13.)

GMA turns down call for ceasefire on AFP advice

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo turned down calls for a ceasefire against Moro rebels in Jolo and ordered the military to push ahead with its offensive nearly a month into clashes that have killed over 100 and sparked thousands, her chief aides said yesterday.

"The position across of the Armed Forces will continue," said Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, adding that "they will not let the rebels reorganize again for an assault on the Armed Forces."

About 20 soldiers and an estimated 70 rebels have been killed in a spate of fighting since members of rebel Moro leader Nur Misuari's Moro National Liberation Front

(Story on Page A12)

Surrender or die: Boy Negro's choice

By Juan Escandor Jr.
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau
Luige A. del Puerto
and Armand Nocum

LIBAGANAN, Camarines Sur—They gave him a choice of surrendering or be killed. He chose to die.

Four days after hiding in a forested area in Camarines Sur and being wounded during a shootout with the police, The third suspect in the Valentine's Day bombing in Makati surrendered to officials of Barangay Manlubi in Naga.

A committee-member Lapid Rumah—also known as Boy Negro, Kin, Ted Santos and Mad Jet—told in an interview yesterday he supplied the bombers with the 'M-16' that blew up a passenger bus on Edsa on Feb. 14. The explosion killed four people and wounded more than 100.

"I told him that he would be killed if he did not surrender," said Barangay Councilor Ferdinan Villaceran, who negotiated with Rumah for two hours before convinced him to surrender.

CAPPAL Ronnie's The Birdman comes forward.

Bombing suspect 'could dunk'

By Luige A. del Puerto

WEEK Cappal Rumah settled to Camarines Sur on by this year, he bought [by] to himself, except on weekends, when he would display his dazzling basketball skills in court.

"He played very good basketball," said Barangay Manlubi Nieves Councilor Ferman Nil. Another fan of Villaceller's work is Rumah's father-in-law.

"You know what?" Camarines

Women know way to warrior's heart

By Veh Contreras

TEST on your mothers, wives, sisters, daughters and nannies—and they all know the way to a warrior's heart.

According to a recent Internet/Weather Stations survey, the majority of Filipinos believe that women are "natural peacemakers." Their sweet and sensitive given bigger roles in power interest negotiations with insurgents and Muslim rebels.

This is bad for thought for the predominantly male leaders and commanders as by Wednesday, who may be opening doors on the then to effective, what with their

MOVING DAY
A Filipino family boards a boat to return to their home in Pulau Gaya, off the coast of Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia, after immigration authorities began rounding up illegal workers mostly Indonesians and Filipinos. Malaysia has agitated to Philippines to give illegals a second chance and return them after they go back home and fix their papers.

AFP wants stiff penalty for media 'terror' interviews

By Dona Pazzibugan

DEFENSE in campaign against terror, the military yesterday publicly declared it wanted a law that would crack down on media organizations interviewing "known terrorists."

Armed Forces Deputy Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Efren Abu said media organizations that would interview such terrorists should be penalized—and penalized stiffly.

"We are recommending stiff penalties [against] media organizations," Abu told reporters.

He said giving terrorists media space should be considered a crime and that sanctions against media were included in the military's proposed anti-terrorism law.

Broadcasting terrorists is like an act of "stupidity," he said.

He did not say what penalties the military had in mind.

Asked if interviewing media would violate press freedom, Adan said: "Actually we view [the interviews] as an abuse of press freedom. They [the terrorists] are using the so-called press freedom to advance themselves. So they are the ones abusing us."

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

SATURDAY, MARCH 5, 2005

WEATHER FORECAST

Second FRONTPAGE

Bishops snub solon's challenge

LAGMAN

CRUZ

By Christian V. Esguerra and Philip C. Tubeza

A RANKING official of the Catholic Church yesterday rejected a lawmaker's challenge to a debate over the issue of family planning, describing it as a petty dare of a street thug.

"We do not accept a basic hoy! challenge like that," Lipa Archbishop Ramon Arguelles told reporters at yesterday's Church-led rally at the Luneta in Manila. "When someone challenges the President (to a debate), do you think the President will go down to that level?"

But if Albay Rep. Edcel Lagman is bent on engaging the Church in a live debate, the bishop says are willing to pit "our unbosom men" who will know more than he does," Arguelles said.

"It's not appropriate that we have him; we're not equals," he said in Filipino, adding that the bishops would name their team only after Lagman had agreed to their terms.

Other bishops also spurned Lagman's challenge, which he aired on Thursday.

Lingayen-Dagupan Archbishop Oscar Cruz said a debate would only divide the people further.

"Personally, I would not take the challenge of the good congressman," Cruz said in a statement.

"He invited whom and how long we debate. I cannot convince him to agree to my position, and neither can his convince me to side with his stand," the archbishop said, adding:

"While we will continue to clarify our statements, I will speak in the sphere of morality but would ultimately be arguing on different frequencies."

The Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines' Episcopal Commission on Family and Life said the Church would naturally oppose any bill that "where the path taken by the same is not illuminated by the truth."

"The truth about the dignity and sacredness of the person, of marriage, of family, is unchanging. No amount of debate can change that truth about man. But any love and fashionable ideas' men that truth into error" the CBCP said in a statement.

'This will pass'

But Lagman said he was confident of the passage of the Responsible Parenthood and Population Management Act (or House Bill No. 3773) despite strong opposition from the Church.

"I am very confident that this will pass the House. Our colleagues understand the needs of their constituents. There is no need to be blind followers of the Church," he said.

Lagman, who co-authored the bill with 11 other congressmen, said Senators Pimfilo Lacson and Gaite Ejercito Estrada had proposed similar measures in the Senate.

"This is not a question of religion. It is about providing the basic reproductive health needs," he said.

Lagman said Thursday that the Church and its allies were spreading misinformation on HB 3773, specifically that it was promoting abortion. He said clergymen had also been pressuring members of the House to withdraw support for the bill.

Yesterday, he said he was confident that with the proper explanations, "the people would realize that the complaints against the bill are off-tangent, irrelevant and without basis."

Lagman declined to name the lawmakers supportive of HB 3773, supposedly on their own response to pressure from being "pressured" by the Church and its lobbyists.

"They will draw their support when the bill is worked on the floor," he said.

Only in Bicol

Mayor Arquiza, president of the Bukluran ng mga Kapamilyan ng Pamilihang Pilipino, said he was willing to take Lagman on.

"I challenge him to a debate in Legazpi City," Arquiza said, claiming that unlike the Manila-based media, reporters there would provide the press coverage of the event.

"You have to remember that the media in Manila put up all these populations control advertisements, and you cannot blame them," he said.

Arquiza said Lagman's facts were erroneous, in the first place.

He said that while the lawmaker purportedly claimed a population growth rate of 2.7 percent, the figure was actually just 1.9 percent, as shown in the National Statistics Office census last year.

He also claimed that a separate census by the United Nations even came up with a much lower estimate of 1.6 percent.

Lagman said the Church had the right to oppose HB 3773, but not to use misinformation about it.

He said that contrary to the Church's claim, the proposed law was not promoting "directly or even indirectly" the use of contraceptives.

Also, population is not the sole cause of poverty, but it "aggravates poverty," Lagman pointed out.

"The nexus between a high population growth rate and a low rate of development and high incidence of poverty is fully documented and empirically demonstrated," he said.

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10,000 attend Church rally

By Marjeca C. Ortiz

POLICE initially estimated the crowd at 10,000, and now it is half after a brief rainstorm.

But the sentiment of the protesters that massed yesterday at the Luneta in Manila for the "Blessing Iloilo Gangpol, Lapas Pamilya" rally was not dampened.

In an interview with the bishops at the side lines of the Church-organized rally, Manila Mayor and Pro-Life Philippines chair Lito Atienza said House Bill 3773, would "destroy the child and the family by promoting birth control and espousing sex education."

Atienza said the proposed measure's author condone would lead to promiscuity among the young because these would encourage them to have sex any time as long as they were "safe."

He said HB 3773 would lead to the deterioration of family values.

"Sex is best learned in the house under the parents' supervision," he said, adding that the best way to fight sexually transmitted diseases like AIDS was "not sex education but values formation."

The rally attended by members of various Church-affiliated groups and Muslim organizations, as well as uniformed students bearing streamers, started at about 3 p.m.

The students cheered as speakers took turns addressing the crowd.

Archbishop Mariano Arosio, chair of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines' Episcopal Commission on Family and Life, insisted that poverty was not a result of overpopulation but of wrong economic prioritization.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2005

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

SPORTS

DEL MONTE'S Dodjie Pinedilla bows up to the putt which he subtly on No. 11 at Riviera. Pinedilla signed for 37 points.

Del Monte catches Southwoods; CSE now within four

By Phoenix B. Castillo

MURCIA, Negros Occidental—Ironic as in many ways, the 24th edition of the Philippine Airlines Interclub golf championship got ugly on a day when play was pretty.

Jeepers. Derail and accidents flew after defending champion Del Monte caught Southwoods at the top and Cashalong made a game run of it going into the final 18 holes of the Championship division.

Dodjie Pinedilla shot a one-under par 69 worth 37 points as the Manila team fell for Del Monte, two as the Negor Barons reclaimed the duty lead created to creep to within four.

Del Monte, which went all four down behind Southwoods, also drew 34 points from Lito Pimentel, 18 from Arthur Jurado and 36 from Jose Pepe Hernandez III to the day and six Southwoods with a three-day 205. Joel Ogsos's 39 tallied no more.

"I think we have a very good chance," said Del Monte skipper Kwong Velez. "Last year, we were also in the lead after the third round and we choked a bit. I like our chances coming into the final round.

"I think, comparing the lineups of the three teams, we are the most experienced."

Jun Rivera aroused for a bobbin set 68 for matching Mandalay mind, said Juno Pagsolan dropped to with 34 points despite being penalized on Cashalong, committed 1 stroke for delay and a 2nd road.

The Negor Barons, who will send Jay Reyes, Ronnie Tumamao, Mel Rosal, Dave Hernandez and Al Pagsolan to the Manpower to be added for the final round today, drew 30 points from Oscar Campos and 28 from Mathew Navarro.

Jose Mari Bautista's 39 did not count.

Southwoods shared duty somewhat, with the 36 points of Ramon Ito Jr. and Gene Bendijo's 33 making up the bulk of its 126.

Jun Jun Rivera contributed 32 and Mike Alejandro's 29 seemed over Bong Bendijo's 69.

Mike Mick stood in fourth with a 207 after posting 100 behind the

[illegible]

Leonard: Pacquiao should use his head

By Rowell Tolentino

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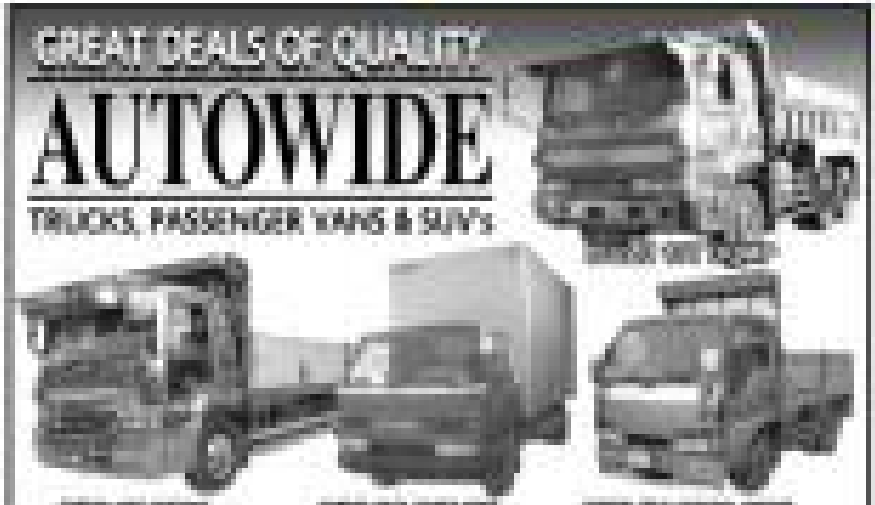

Boys town founder remembered

THE SISTERS of Mary will mark the 120th death anniversary of its founder Mtgr. Mariano Arboleda on March 14 this year.

SCHWARTZ

Mtgr. Arboleda, who also founded the Boys town and Girls town through the Sisters of Mary in the Philippines, died on March 14, 1905. After an interregnum Lateral Ecclesiam. His remains are buried in Sibig, Siaton, Negros Oriental.

The archdiocesan process for his canonization was opened last Dec. 10, 2000, and was closed on May 29, 2004.

Born in Washington, DC on Sept. 18, 1908, to Louis Schwartz and Cordelia Bauman, Mary Schwartz had received conversion while she was in the process of the priest as a missionary priest.

Mtgr. Schwartz studied Theology at Louvain Catholic University in Belgium and was ordained on June 29, 1957, in Washington. He subsequently went to Negros Oriental, his life missionary works.

He established Boys' town and Girls' towns to take care and educate and give a bright future to the orphans, abandoned children and very poor children.

He first visited the Philippines in 1982 to receive the Ramon Magsaysay Award for International Understanding. He was met by Aimee Cardinal Sin, then Archbishop of Manila, and he asked him to establish his charity programs in the Philippines. Thus, in 1983 only seven houses, namely St. Schwartz returned to the Philippines to establish the Sisters of Mary and his seven houses and 6 orphanages.

Prayer booklets are being distributed at the Sisters of Mary Children's Complex in Sta. Sibig, Siaton. Tel. Fax (035) 413-05-75.

Bishops give up on bid to broker peace in Luisita

By Philip C. Tubeza

DESPITE the influential Catholic bishops have given up trying to resolve negotiations between striking farmers and the management of Hacienda Luisita, according to Bishop Teresa Dominguez "Noynoy" Aquino III.

Aquino said on Thursday that the Catholic bishops had stopped their efforts to help resolve the labor dispute due to the tremendous pressure of the farmers' leaders.

"They have realized that the thing of going against the party line," he said in an interview.

He added that the bishops also realized that they might only be "used" in the dispute.

Last month, Aquino's brother Bishop Teodoro Arsenio del Rosario and Bishop Florentino Cinense tried to mediate between the union and management of Central Azucarera.

They even personally sought the President's assurance that there would be no violence on the part of the police and military that would be enforcing the DOLE decision on the Cantiel Resources.

But on Thursday, Farhar City councilor Abdulrahi Jadjira was shot dead, fueling fears of more violence in the vast sugar estate owned by the family of former President Corazon Aquino.

Abdulgawali Sep. Crispin Beltran confirmed the assassination, denied back into the "peaceful fold" of Mr Aquino's family, the Cojuangcos, over the killing.

Prosecutor Mercedes Jadjira, a key witness in the violent dispersal of the striking workers on Nov. 15, 2004, was shot dead in January by suspected gunmen aides.

"What are the motives[illegible]? Who stands to benefit from the elimination of a progressive local leader such as Ladera? These are the points that the current investigation should address," Beltran said, adding that Ladera's murder was an ominous sign of more crimes to come.

House asks Palace to recall P8-B LRT expansion contract

By Michael Lim Ubac

ANOTHER irregularity

The House of Representatives oversight committee has asked President Macapagal-Arroyo to immediately recall the contract awarded to a Japanese firm for the expansion of the Light Rail Transit (LRT) project from Monumento in Caloocan City to Stanmont in Quezon City due to alleged bidding irregularities.

Rep. Emilio Ramos, oversight committee chair, said the Palace must also do so to save with the pronouncements during the July 1 celebration to continue the fight against corruption.

Ramos gave the Palace a copy of House Resolution No. 624 in session with the 18-billion 120 Line 1 Capacity Expansion Project, which will connect LRT Line 1 to the Metro Rail Transit corridor.

The resolution, signed by 32 committee members, showed that Light Rail Transit Authority (LRTA) could be held liable for grave damages for the highly "irregular" award of the project to Sumitomo Corp. of Japan.

After a series of public hearings, the committee found "grave procedural lapses in the bidding and award of the project" which "raised all the integrity not only of the bidding process but of the entire project whose costs would be obviously be borne by the Filipino taxpayers."

Ramos said the bidding was done in "midnight hours" which was "rather unusual for an P8-billion project."

He said Sumitomo undoubtedly benefited from the allegedly illegal acts of LRTA officials, saying it was very clear that there was a specific design, motive and intent to favor Sumitomo and the latter allegedly conspired with LRTA officials both in handling the government.

On top of this, the LRTA is under fire for its plan to raise fares from P12 to P20.

On Thursday, a lawmaker moved to block the proposed hike by resolving an inquiry into the allegedly "anomalous transactions" which cost the government P1 billion in losses.

Deputy Minority Leader Alan Peter Cayetano said the Metro Commuter on good government will conduct the probe.

"They LRTA officials] have to justify it in the committee level before they could raise the fare. Why increase fares due to corruption from the ridiculous?" he asked.

Cayetano said the more than 100-percent increase in LRT fare was "incensed," noting that just past present LRTA administrations had awarded billions of pesos due to allegedly corrupted or non-transparent purchases of equipment and technical services, and negligence.

Cayetano also disclosed that LRTA incurred losses from a "rigged bidding" for another project, the Management Information System for LRT 2 which runs from Recto in Manila to Santolan in Pasig City.

It was later found that all the three bidders were "naturally interrelated and" by the same group of people. The bidders were Ethos, Easy Net Services and Search/Delta Bridge, the winning bidder.

GMA lawyer pushes bid to zap Congress

[illegible]

Presidente Macapagal-Arroyo's election lawyer, Romulo Macalintal, yesterday revived his call for the abolition of Congress to save resources.

Macalintal restored his proposal (but a constitutional amendment to abolish the Senate SOON to change the form of government into a "semi-parliamentary" system with a unicameral legislature by 2010 after congressmen suggested the abolition of the Senate).

He noted that while congressmen last year criticized his proposal, the lawmakers themselves are now calling for a smaller legislature.

"They're now voting their own sentiments," Macalintal said.

He said that the speculation small, or legislature was drawn with the ongoing controversy over the Senate's passage of the 2005 budget.

Macalintal explained that the controversy showed that the bicameral parliamentary committee, which reconciles bills from the House of Representatives and the Senate, could drastically reduce time passed by both chambers.

"It shows that bills passed by the 25th member Congress and a 24-member Senate could be easily changed by a committee of 20 to 25 lines," Macalintal said.

Philip C. Tubeza

Reyes bats for rights course at cop academy

By Norman Bordadora

INTERIOR Secretary Angelo Reyes yesterday ordered the instructions of a complete course on human rights to be included in the curriculum of the Philippine National Police Academy.

Reyes' move came in an human rights education for future police officers comes in the wake of a UP-ness department report that ranked the PNP as one of the top Philippine government agencies involved in human rights violations and extra-judicial executions.

"The Philippine government does not and will not tolerate human rights abuses, including 'salvaging' or extra-judicial killings and violations. We adhere to rule-of-law and due process," Reyes said.

Reyes hopes the introduction of a full course on human rights will lead to an improvement in the PNP's image with regard to respect for human rights.

ISM still part of SEA Games' marketing drive

By Jeannine W. Pape

INTER SPORTS Marketing, the Makati-based brand-name of the last four Southeast Asian Games, has not withdrawn from its commitment to anchor the country's marketing drive for the SEA Games this year.

"ISM is still part of our efforts to raise funds," said Philippine SEA Games Organizing Committee (Phloc) chair Isidro "Dave" Ingco Jr. last night.

Ingco, however, admitted that the ISM name is "dormant" for the moment.

Right now, we're just opening our communication channels," he said.

The statement came on the heels of reports emanating from the Phloc that ISM had backed out of its commitment to serve as the exclusive marketing arm of the SEA Games, a move the Phloc officials denied.

"We're continuing what we started last year," said ISM Philippines agent Bing Ang Herring, who added that the firm is currently finalizing negotiations with several multinational companies regarding the sponsorship of the Games.

Herring said ISM's Malaysian-based director, Richard Ishe, made it clear yesterday that the firm, which handled marketing efforts of four previous SEAG hostings, is not withdrawing from the year's staging.

Pagbilao gave the deal, however, that the Phlocs will only ISM of its exclusivity and allow Coca-Cola Inc., a marketing group organic to the Phlocs, to explore other sponsorship options with a more widened reach after ISM failed to meet its Feb. 28 deadline to submit finalized deals.

"We gave them a deadline to finalize transactions and they asked for an extension," Pagbilao explained. "Right now, we have to consider other options."

"If ISM signs up sponsors, we will soon have to study down on a case to case basis," he added.

Pagbilao was also denied a possible rift between the two marketing groups in the wake of reports that ISM had backed out of the SEAG funding efforts.

"If so all, it allows us to cover more ground because now, there are two groups looking for sponsors for the Games," said Ole Phlocs chief.

Coeplan's awkward result, however, presents a tricky communication problem for the Phlocs, brutally strained to tap into the local market. Coeplan now has the go-signal to start the multinational sea race.

Cocolan chief executive officer Joey Cura yesterday said his group is now talking to several multinational brands, including Samsung and Nestlé, two companies that ISM is also finalizing deals with.

Cocolan said these firm is currently working out deals with LG Electronics, Kodak and Panasonic.

To date, the Phlocs has only sealed one sponsorship deal, Globe Telecom's P1.00 million account share to the Games relayed through Pag-dangerous's efforts.

Imports fail to shine in PBA opening

STA. LUCIA'S Marlon Aquino deflects a pass to Coca-Cola import Ja Ja Richards.

Leonard: Pacquiao should use his head

EXCLUSIVE Pacquiao training.

Del Monte ties Southwoods

The lion in Leonardia

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

Marcopper still owes mine spill victims ₱40M

By Blandina S. Rivera

MARCOPPER Mining Corp. still owes the mine spill victims at least ₱40 million in unpaid compensation, proof that the government cannot guarantee the protection of communities affected by mining operations, this is according to the Mancuhasan Council for Environmental Concerns (MACEC).

The multinational MACEC claimed that Marcopper failed to comply with the resolution of Mogpog municipality despite the recommendation for payment obtained by the victims from the Environmental Guarantee Fund three years ago.

MACEC representative Adelina Angeles disclosed yesterday that five of the six barangays in Mogpog are demanding the second batch of damages remain pending.

"After making the people go through the tedious procedures to qualify as claimants, they will do not get anything," Angeles said in a press briefing of the Mogpog Municipal Council in Quezon City yesterday.

She said Marcopper released a portion of the ₱40-million payment to one of the six barangays in Mogpog two days before the International Mining Conference was last month. She did not say how much.

The Mogpog spills date to Mogpog was flowed in December 1993, forming a water deluge in the Mogpog River, Boac River, and the surrounding rice fields and farmland.

Angeles also expressed doubts if the $12-million payment fund for the rehabilitation of the Boac river actually existed. The river collected a mine spill in 1996 and remained so after the Mogpog spills there.

Marcopper and its Canadian partner Placer Dome have been mining copper in Marinduque since the 1970s. It was only in 1996, following another huge mine spill in Boac, that mining operations were stopped.

"We expect the Supreme Court to order the Ombudsman to file charges against Arroyo," Angeles said.

Environment Secretary Michael Defensor has given Marcopper until the end of the year to clean up mine tailings in the Boac river or face legal action.

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3 senators want their pork 'frozen'

THREE senators have formally asked President Macapagal-Arroyo not to release their pork fund (Calculator—₱1B) millions for each of them—for any purpose.

In a letter circulated through Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin, Senate President Franklin Drilon and Senator Panfilo Lacson and Alfredo Lim told Mr. Arroyo that the budget deficit at the end of 2004 should reflect a ₱366-million reduction, representing the allocations that they had waived.

The three, who voted along with the other senators last Tuesday to adopt the bicameral conference budget, decided to forgo their pork barrel, a rich source of kickbacks for unscrupulous politicians and contractors.

They went on same space from the President that the allocations they had waived would not be given to other lawmakers.

Eight senators had earlier signed a resolution waiving 60 percent of their Priority Development Assistance Fund (or pork barrel allocation) to help the government deal with the fiscal crisis. But the resolution was not passed.

In the end Senators Juan Flavier and Francis Pangilinan have submitted their nonentrance.

But Sen. Manuel Villar, chair of the Senate finance committee, said the office always would welcome the senator on 02 Oct 2005 "formally."

He said he had yet to receive any letter. —Jethro Ludwig Arevalo

House moves to stop word war . . .

stormed around," said House Majority Leader Prospero Nograles, who on Thursday proposed the closure of the House through the creation of a consensual body to be called "Congress."

According to Nograles, Senate members were merely vacillating their disgust at the senators' claim that the House wanted a bicameral conference on the national budget only "to save face."

"We are at the receiving end [of the senators'] ire," he said. "This is not good public-relations [sic] courtesy among [lawmakers]. They must at least explain why they made such accusations."

Rep. Prospero Pichay Jr. (Lakas, Kampi) defended the House, saying: "Why are we fighting?"

Pichay said the House should be happy that the Senate saw the "wisdom" of the lower chamber in adopting the House-approved budget for 2005.

"Somehow this is a good move to certify as to that the fiscal crisis will be addressed," he said, and urged his colleagues to make do with the ₱40-billion pork fund[, down from the nearly ₱70-million allocation he said.

Pichay, vice chair of the Commission on Appointments, said the country has "enough problems and controversies."

He was only opposing the political insensitivity of [his author]. Does one set aside our people when we, their leaders, are squabbling for pogi [personal] points?" he added.

LP overflows

Saying the people would turn cold to us even more if lawmakers did not stop bickering, four senators and 30 representatives belonging to the Liberal Party called for an end to the word war.

They separately delivered speeches in both houses of Congress, one people demand change and results from [the] government," the LP said in a manifesto addressed to all legislators.

"This impasse between our chambers will only increase the ill feelings [that] our countrymen have against politicians and the legislature as an institution," said the party allied with President Macapagal-Arroyo's administration.

The manifesto was signed by Senate President Drilon, LP president Senate Majority Leader Francis Pangilinan, vice chair; Sen. Mar Roxas, vice president for policy; [Sen. Rodolfo Biazon, and 14 party] members in the House.

The LP urged lawmakers to engage in concrete deliberations.

"During these trying times, we must secure our people from external pressure with urgent action to everything that we do as a legislative body," it said.

The party warned that both the Senate and the House were at the losing end of the word war.

"Our people deserve more

Sluggish Bata shows door to Thai rival

By Jane Navarro

SINGAPORE—Howard Eliros "Bata" Reyes rolled an ironic luck on easier one a 9-6 victory over Thailand's Pimchaiya Poonpiengraj yesterday in the first round of the Yon Miguel Asian 9-Ball Tour at the Sanzer Exhibition Hall here.

Reyes said he musing now off but the problem played wide ("Hide ay timing ko para outside rapa bola") at he upped tathographic and posed for souvenir photos.

Stalked by a sluggish start, Bata took advantage of Poonpiengraj's collapse in the 12th rack to take them over the last five sets and advance to the second round.

"I have no choice but to entertain them," Reyes said smiling. "Hindi [kasi] a tougher opponent, I would've [owned] set easily."

Reyes faces the winner between Tu Trung Kiet of Vietnam and Ernesto Blaz Mon-oli in the second round.

Francisco "Django" Bustamante's 9-4 victory over Lee Itoh of China here in this also practically cut all Filipino entries into the next round. Bustamante will next meet the winner between Singapore's Marcus Ng Chwee Kiat and Vietnam's Nguyen Thanh Nhan.

Lee Vann Corteza swamped Mohamad Asyraf of Indonesia, 9-4, to arrange a second-round encounter with Japan's Kazuhiko Takahashi. Corteza will try to avenge a second-round loss to Takahashi in the 2004 Mr. Billiard Classic in Manila.

Carlo Biado forged a duel with Singapore's William Ang Boon Lay following a 9-3 thrashing of his Taiwan of Hong Kong.

Reyes will tangle with Tan Aun Chye of Singapore in the next phase.

Antonio Gabica, who bounced past Japan's Kazuhiko Takahashi, 9-4, is expecting to meet Reyes in the quarterfinals should the Lifesaver pool not favor the survivor of the Yon Jose Han Singapore's Chong Kawan (Chinese Taipei) round-four the second-round.

Gabica beat Reyes in the PSA-sailless Hope Intl. Bank—Bangkok-leg to Orlando last week barely's and about to bet his guard down in the quest for the $10,000 big winner's game in the organized by ESPN Star Sports.

"Hilo Reyes ay, 8-9, Photographing Chew a withdrawn-remote shot on the second-half and missed. I almost the case ball's line of motion on his next shot, allowing Reyes to draw the table and down the Thai's frames.

Laurente stakes OPBF crown in Japan today

WORLD Boxing Council No. 7 contender and Oriental and Pacific Boxing Federation lightweight champ Dennis Laurente makes his title bid today when he takes on Japan's Chikachi Inada in a 12-round fight at the Korakuen Hallin Tokyo.

The southpaw Laurente (23-1-1, 11 KOs) of the Ashwar Elorde subdistrict on the Hondurez-born Inada (a grudge rematch of their first encounter in October 2004 won by the Filipino via a majority decision.

Aubert L. Lagundoy, Contributor

Laguna tests CdO as adidas nat'l football kicks off today

THE IRC game will dissect the best squads emerge from the addidas when the 2005 PFF-Adidas National Men's Championship kicks off at 3 p.m. today at the Don Gregorio Hibner Sports Center in Cagayan de Oro City.

Today's lone match, set immediately after the opening ceremonies, pits Cagayan de Oro against Laguna, last year's runner-up.

The weeklong tournament, also known as the Mayor Vicente P. Emano Cup, features the eight squads that topped the seven qualifying matches staged in various provinces across the country.

The teams will be divided into two groups with Laguna, Iloilo, Davao and host Cagayan de Oro forming Group A and Negros Occidental, Quezon, Zamboanga and reigning champion HCR vying in Group B.

Coach Jo Laguna's doubleone squad will be led by Miguel Luarbay, Jonas Escobero, Ed Sylvester Palmos on attack, Hiroyo Mark Calubiran in the midfield and Reynaldo Galacion as defense.

Cagayan de Oro Mayor Vicente Emano, Misamis Oriental Gov. Oscar Moreno, PFF president Atty. Miguel G. Rodriguez and addidas Philippines president Jose Antonio P. Alcantara will be on hand at the opening ceremony.

The March 5-11 event is supported by PFF sponsors partners Red Ribbon Bakeshop, Inc., products and Bench, it is organized and hosted by the Cagayan de Oro Minoro Oriental Football association and the Rotary Club of Bay Area and backed by Sen. Oscar Moreno, Rep. Tomas Jaraula, Brandee Kadyo Philippines and the Philippine Sports Commission.

PMI tows 3 NCR quints to students semifinals

By Mary Anthony Reyes

SEBASTE CITY—They were all supposed to gather in the Provincial Students basketball semifinals, but the way the Bohemoth Capital Region left got them yesterday easily come as a surprise.

Defending champion Philippine Merchant Institute and University of Rizalmed Ricky Racal smuggled Laguna separate results, as was Manila Central University overcame fellow NCR entry University of Manila Pirates, 89-81.

The PMI Admirals rallied from eight points down late in the third quarter to down hard-fighting Holy Cross of Davao, 69-64, at the Luis Padre Alba na Gym here.

The Perpetual Altar encountered tough calling before subduing Ilden Hergen College of Iloilo, 68-62, over at the Tarpan Gym.

It will be PMI against UM on the semifinals today, with Perpetual meeting Southern City College-Cotabato in the other match.

The Zamboangueños became the first representative qualifier in the Final 4 by dominating a Bohol Institute of Technology team that was featuring records a forty-some Thursday.

In today's action, the Chinese College of Quezon City handled past Iloilo Central Commercial High, 91-76, also in Tarpan to make the Final 4 along with defending champion San Beda, Philippine Christian University and Holy Child of Davao.

Rest up for the Lakeview Stars, managed by former go-to-guy Ariel Dalmin Jose, coached by Teodoro Alvin Cruz, saw the Cebu select dominate a marvelous 34-point wear of Sacred Heart Cebu to the semifinals.

The Holy Dolphins will battle the Davao delivers in the other semifinals.

PMI was dragged against Holy Cross and needed a verbal jolt from coach Dioscoro Ibarra upon seeing the Mariners back to their senses.

"I told them a halftime that I [we] should backed a fight for home vancouvers because they looked like they didn't want to win," said Santiago.

The Admirals, who leaded 35-26 going into the third quarter, grabbed the lead for good at 59-58 midway in the fourth quarter after stalwart Leroy Santiago scored on a layup for a point.

PMI also succeeded in silencing Holy Cross main man John Sacobia, who finished with only nine points...even in the second half...a day after his scoreboard 47-point performance in his team's triple-overtime victory over University of Baguio.

Brothers Cris and Joy Santamaria and Ronie Carter took turns in sending with ensemble for the 6-foot 1/2 guard, who caught the eye of La Salle coach Franz Pumaren.

The La Salle mentor was among the slew of collegiate coaches "random-shopping" here along with Pat Fumarcis Ben Mbaye and Jose Rizal's Cris Calilan.

The Admiral by as many as 14 points, 51-38, early in the fourth quarter before the Mariners embroiled a 17-5 bomb that cut the lead to 68-62 with one minute and 10 seconds left.

But center Marvin Cuevas's lay-up to give the pirates a 69-62 lead, 46 seconds to go.

PTA selling Mt. Data Lodge, 11 other assets

By Jerome Aning

THE PHILIPPINE Tourism Authority is offering 12 of its 19 assets for outright sale, lease or co-management ventures to interested private investors.

PTA general manager and chief executive officer Mabel Ongpin Bautista made the announcement yesterday after the agency's board approved a resolution declaring properties and facilities as possible tourism development in the country.

Real properties for outright sale or joint-venture arrangements with the PTA are the Agoo Playa Hotel in La Union, Mt. Data Hotel in the Mountain Province, Sea Breeze Beach Resort in Pangasinan, Macabebian Park Beach Resort in Leyte, Anjao Beach Club and Mantanzaan Nature Park in Cebu, Hilaga in Pampanga, Garden of Balikatan Eco-Tourism Village in Cagayan de Oro, Zamboanga Golf Course and Beach Club in Zamboanga City and the Boracay International Duty-Free Tourism Project in Boracay Island.

Joint-venture or lease agreements over the next few years, the PTA will focus on the metropolitan cities and development of projects as opposed to simply managing them.

"PTA's current strategy is to invest in its original mandate of turning tourism-related assets over for private management," Bautista said, adding the move would allow his agency to initiate tourism infrastructure projects that are of national interest.

According to Bautista, tourism investors have tallied $115 million in 2000 and the PTA management has projected revenue collection target for next year due to aggressive marketing and promotion.

He said he believes self-contained and profitable projects should be managed privately to enhance their profit potential and thus, increase their contribution to the country's tourism efforts.

The PTA, an attached agency of the Department of Tourism, was established in May 11, 1973 under Presidential Decree No. 564 to encourage infrastructure projects that are supportive of domestic and international tourism.

PTA currently has over 18 assets under management and has completed over 40 tourism-related projects.

In 1994, he moved to double some of its tourist entities to local government units so they can have a direct participation in managing tourist attractions within their jurisdiction to gain revenues and generate job opportunities for them based concentrations.

Among those entities are the Pagsanjan Gorge National Park and the Hundred Islands National Park.

RP not giving up Sabah claim despite crackdown

By Jerome Aning

THE DEPARTMENT of Foreign Affairs clarified yesterday that allowing Malaysia to arrest and deport undocumented Filipinos in Sabah was not tantamount to the Philippine government's giving up its dormant claim on the island territory.

DFA Undersecretary for Migrant Workers Affairs Jose Brillantes said that Manila would continue to pursue its claim through the International Court of Justice even as it attends to the needs of the thousands of undocumented Filipinos expected to be sent home from Sabah.

In recent press conferences with labor undersecretary Manuel Imson, Brillantes downplayed fears Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes that government's silence on the claim amid the ongoing crackdown might be interpreted by Kuala Lumpur as evidence that the Philippines was no longer interested in Sabah.

Brillantes, a former ambassador to Malaysia, said the issue was political which would be "addressed sooner or later, possibly sooner." He pointed out that the DFA already has its "Sabah draft" that would come up with measures to settle the Sabah issue.

What is more immediate, he said, was to ensure that the estimated Filipinos are treated humanely and be safely and orderly repatriated to the Philippines.

Brillantes and Manila opposed Kuala Lumpur's decision to allow Filipinos who availed of the amnesty to work again in Malaysia after they get proper documentation.

There are between 250,000 and half a million Filipinos in Sabah, most of them undocumented. About 6,000 returned during the amnesty period that ended last month.

Imson said the Philippines plans to have a permanent presence in Sabah through the Bansat Indonesian Malaysia Philippines East Asean Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA), a sub-regional economic cooperation group formed in 1994.

He said Filipino government personnel will be deployed in Sabah through the BIMP-EAGA to monitor and attend to the welfare of the Filipinos in the Malaysian state.

The Philippines does not have a diplomatic outpost in Sabah.

However, Malaysia regularly sent diplomatic Philippine government officer to Sabah to observe the Philippine sovereignty there.

The Philippine Embassy in Kuala Lumpur intermittently deploys mobile teams to Sabah where the latest estimate, made on the occasion of travel visas.

The Philippines asserts that Sabah was part of the Sultanate of Sulu which leased the territory to the British North Borneo Company in 1878 and became part of Malaysia in 1963.

Kuala Lumpur continues to pay the Sultanate annual rental for the territory as provided for in the original lease.

Oil price hikes . . .

Front page A1

February average of $30.10 a barrel. The March 2 spot price was $37.46 a barrel.

Domestic oil prices are based on international prices, with Dubai as the benchmark for crude products in Asia, and the Mean of Platts Singapore (MOPS) as the basis for refined products.

Domestic oil prices simply reflect the cost of crude plus duties and foreign exchange rates. For importers of finished oil products, the MOPS is a key indicator for oil prices.

Global demand

Always noted that price surges of this magnitude have in the past been driven by geopolitical developments.

This time, however, they seem to be the result of a persistent market force, a renewed demand for oil across the globe. Countries have ratcheted on their growth tracks," he said.

Even at these record prices, the demand for oil continues to grow, as much as that the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries will have to decide soon to increase production, Ahuja said.

The surge in world oil prices to justify due to the unwelcome in the Opec supply. Other factors include the prolonged winter in Europe and the northeastern United States as well as continuing violence in the Middle East.

Opec meets March 16

Opec members are to meet on March 16 in Vienna to discuss what to do with their present production.

Also expected to be on the agenda is the setting of the Opec price band for an basket of crudes, previously placed at between $22 and $28 a barrel.

Should the Opec decide to boost its price band to between $30 and $50 a barrel, motorists and consumers could see a ranging up of pump prices, Ahuja said.

Barely a week after increasing their prices, now oil plants found Petroleum Corp. and Petron Corp. announced price hikes of 30 centavos a liter yesterday and Friday.

Increased twice since Jan.

Since the start of the year, gasoline prices have increased twice by a total of P1.10 a liter.

Diesel prices have gone up three times by a total of P1.30 a liter.

Shell and Flying V said the continued rise in international oil prices and fundamental product prices had forced them to increase pump prices.

The big oil companies, including refiners Petron Corp. and Philippine Shell, have yet to announce their new price adjustments but are hesitant to do so soon.

Women know way to warrior's heart

From page A1

on and off talks with the separatist Moro Islamic Liberation Front and the communist New People's Army.

The SWS survey said 66 percent of the respondents agreed with this statement. "A successful peace process in Mindanao needs as much participation from women as from men." Only 15 percent disagreed and 15 percent were undecided.

NCR pro-women

Three out of Dec Filipinos—or 61 percent—further agreed that "women must be represented in the peace panel of the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front or MILF," the poll said.

Over half or 51 percent surveyed, while agreed that "a woman has more ideal than a man to find a way to settle a conflict without resorting to violence." Twenty-two percent disagreed and 27 were undecided.

The pro-women view was strongest in the National Capital Region with 66 percent, followed by the rest of Luzon with 63 percent.

However, it was not as strong in the Visayas, where only 51 percent of the respondents agreed, and in Mindanao itself, home of the MILF, where only 48 percent agreed, 24 percent disagreed and 28 percent were undecided.

Lady Presidents

While the survey doesn't say exactly what feminine "talents" may be useful in dealing with ban. On several MILF commanders or Ulemas based claims of the communist movement, there seems to be no limit to what women power can accomplish as a president—namely Catholic Virgin Mary serving justice.

Filipinos also stand out among Asians for having elected two lady presidents, so it comes as no surprise when some quarters saw presidential potential in actress Susan Roces, widow of the popular actor-politician Fernando Poe Jr.

But not everything in the survey was flattering to women. 81 spouse were divided, for instance, when asked whether they thought women were "more effective than men in preserving conflict," the SWS said.

After hardships

This particular finding seemed to indicate that women would watch their steps lest when resorting down submissive after—not before—armed hostilities have erupted.

"The nationwide opinion was split, with 38 percent who agreed, 31 percent undecided, and 30 who disagreed," the pollster said.

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SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM

Centering prayer retreat

CONTEMPLATIVE Outreach Phil. will be conducting a three-day "Introduction to Centering Prayer Retreat" from March 14 to 16 at the St. Joseph Shrine Retreat House in Tagaytay City.

"Centering Prayer" is a method designed to facilitate the development of contemplative prayer by popularizing our Christian heritage into God's gift. It is an ancient to update efficient methods of prayer.

The retreat starts at 12 noon of March 14 and ends at noon of March 16. For information, contact Jessie at tel. nos. 840-8291, 917-7251, 949-8291 and 840-8830.

Samaroños reunion set

CALLING all 1955 high school graduates of Catbalogan, Samar's, first oldest schools.

Two days of fun reunion (one day) is slated soon in Catbalogan, Samar, on April 15 and 16, 2005 for the Golden Jubilee celebration of the founders of the class of 1955 of Samar High School, Samar Trade School, Samar Hotel College (now St. Mary's College) and Samar College.

For details, call organizers "Sen" Bolick, Jr. at (281) 251-8006, Ben Singson, (632) 631-7548 or (0917) 577-9409, Leandro Abellar-Garcia (281) 251-2322 and Nestor Jabalde-Sol, (281) 251-1067, (0917) 545-9130 or (0921) 501-7730.

REMEDIOS PAPA POBLETE

PHILADELPHIA POBLETE

Assumption honors . . .

Front page A1

Inir Milagros Papa Poblete.

The awards ceremony will take place on March 18, the feast of the Seamless Mother Mary. Regente, during the "Recent Hour" college homecoming after the 5:30 p.m. Mass.

It a press statement from Assumption College, Sharai Bulan Prieto was cited as "truly a master of faith and action, commitment and excellence, a beacon of hope for the young women of today."

"Actively involved in business for the past 40 years, she has made her mark in the community by adhering to the principles of honesty and integrity.

"That a man and his at all his transactions and negotiations in treasures and director of various real estate development companies, in the paper industry, in food production and in the field of the law endeavors, in media as board chairman of the business.

"With her quiet and unassuming ways, she was able to influence the socio-political and economic environment of the country in many positive and meaningful directions. She was able to make a difference.

"She guide yet lists manner with people metropolitan when Mary Mahr Regente describes as "unselfish . . . the kind of charity," the distinction executive said.

Remedios Poblete

Assumption said that Remedios Poblete, a college faculty member, was considered by many as "the best professor of Math and Statistics."

Assumption cited Poblete, academic dean, for her calm leadership and quiet sensibility. "She exemplified professionalism, discipline and inspired many, including the poor whom she continues to serve, living up to the commitments of excellence and faithfulness.

"A woman who truly radiates the charism and values of Blessed Marie Eugenie, Remy is a role model in her Assumption family. She continues to live the virtues of discipline, integrity, simplicity, respect, fidelity and sensitivity to the poor."

Milagros Poblete

Assumption cited the late Milagros Poblete, who died in 1992, as "a woman before the ideals of Mary Marie Eugenie.

"She was an inspiration to all her students. She did not just teach, she gave her students attentive. She contributed the success of private schools in the most confident speaker. It gave her joy and fulfillment to be able to hone a tough acute into a polished diamond," the Assumption press statement said.

Other outstanding Assumption alumnae honored in the past years were President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, Maureen Fitzgerald and Susan Roces.

Inclusion of criminal records in ID mulled

THE DEPARTMENT of National Defense is asking the inclusion of an individual's criminal records in the proposed national identification system being pushed by Malacañang.

Defense Secretary Avelino Cruz said the Department sees no reason why this information could not be included in the ID, noting that these are already recorded in previous fraud IDs—either the Social Security System or the Government Service and Insurance System.

Cruz said the DND would propose the inclusion of criminal records in the national ID when the Anti-Terror Task Force starts drafting a comprehensive internal security bill for endorsement to Congress.

But a top DSS official denied that previous fraud IDs have their members' criminal records in their files.

"We only have the basic information regarding their personal data and their beneficiaries. We don't ask for the criminal records of our members," said DSS assistant vice president for media affairs Joel Delarosa.

Cruz said the government would use the 35 million SSS members and over 1 million GSIS members as a base to launch the national ID. Cruz said that with such a massive core, it would be easy to implement the ID system nationwide.

Cruz said the goal of the national ID was to give each citizen a single identification number that he or she could use in government transactions and background checking. "With one number for each individual, it is easier to check their files from a computer," Cruz said. GIC Cabuntagan, Jr.

Surrender or die: Boy Negro's choice

[illegible] evening hours to give himself up.

"I am determined him a lot," he said.

Bantuk had been shot and wounded in the buttocks in an encounter with armed officers on Monday, police said.

Police Director Rafael Delfin, the police's top intelligence official, said Bantuk was no "ordinary rebel-bandit member" as described earlier. He is both a mastermind and an overall commander of the Boy Negro group.

Police said Bantuk and another person, Jomar Antalik, who is under custody, were also the people who abandoned a bag of explosives in a billiards center in Taguig days after the Makati blast. The police discovered the bag of explosives on Feb. 25.

Asked in an interview on ABS-CBN-2 network, Bantuk said in Tagalog: "Bala pa magbigay po ng TNT (I was the one who ordered to give the TNT)."

Pricked by conscience

He said the order came from Abu Sayyaf leader Abdurajak Janjalani and Abu Khalil. Solaiman is the name of an Abu Sayyaf spokesperson who went on radio to claim the group's responsibility for the Feb. 14 series of bombings in Makati, Greenhills in San Juan and Ilaya-Dalan.

Khalil was one of two persons arrested by Iranian after the Bikaol blast.

Jailed valley for surrendered, Bantuk said: "For the sake of my family. My two sisters cannot bear what I did."

Talking to other reporters later, Bantuk said that it was his fellow Abu Sayyaf members Khalil and Ismail Solaiman, another suspect in custody, who made the bomb and executed the Makati attack.

Reason for surrendering

Solaiman and Khalil are facing criminal complaints for multiple murder and multiple frustrated murder.

"I was afraid they (ABC superiors) would ask me again to do something bad. I was also afraid they would kill me and harm my family because I asked to get out from the group. That's why I surrendered in the meantime," he said.

"I didn't know they would use it on Valentine's Day in Makati," he added.

According to him, he met his cohorts in a gasoline station in Taguig about 6:30 p.m. last Feb. 13, and turned over to them the bomb-making materials.

Following the deadly bombing, he said he went into hiding, but not before learning a portion of the remaining bomb materials in a hollow block in Taguig.

Based on interviews with policemen and town officials, Bantuk had hidden in a forested area in the barangay, without any connection.

Barangay leaders helped

"When I saw him, he was full of dirt and was walking wet. He hid in the underbrush and groaned," Villamor told reporters.

Villamor was able to talk to the suspect because the father of Bantuk's common-law wife, a native of Bicol, works for the barangay councilor.

Councilor Ser Rey Rolando Arellano said it was Christoph Ubi outreach that authorities were able to trace Bantuk.

Immediately after we learned that the police were making house raids, we called the ABC (Association of Barangay Captains) president Rolando Arellano," Arellano told the reporters.

Arellano told all barangay chairs in town to help verify his presence," he said.

Newly born child

Andaya and Comanivan for Gen. Lt. Ray Villafuerte said that Bantuk's surrender showed that if local authorities and national agencies worked together, peace and order problems could be resolved.

"There were no way out for him. It was really a joint effort by everyone. But his surrender would not have happened if the police had not cleared to us him," Andaya said.

There might also be another reason why Bantuk surrendered, Villamor said.

Bantuk's wife gave birth to a child on Jan. 23.

"He really wanted to see that child," Villamor said. "That's why he went home that night (Thursday)."

All the time that Bantuk was hiding, his wife had an idea where he was or whether he was still alive, the councilor said.

A true Muslim

Then from nowhere, Bantuk showed up at his home on Thursday night. He was told of the police offer for him to surrender in exchange for his safety.

He agreed to meet Villamor in a rice field where they talked for two hours under the cover of the night.

When he finally accepted the offer, the councilor said he brought Bantuk to a place nearby to eat.

"He would not eat pork—he was a Muslim—as I found Bok Bok him," Villamor said.

For four days, before his surrender, a composite team of military and police battalion chasing Bantuk in Bicol. It left expert-lowered core forces and villages.

Reward money

The Head Police distributed flyers to residents that read: "Boy Negro, surrender now for (at possible) dealing with the government, and your rights will be protected."

Yesterday, police presented Bantuk to the media.

The local officials who helped facilitate Bantuk's surrender will receive P1,50,000, the police said.

President Fidel Ramos has announced the surrender of Bantuk.

"This ushers the entire case," the said reporters in Manila, adding:

"It is a victory for people's cooperation... this turned in Boy Negro," said Senior Superintendent Magtas, provincial director of the Philippine National Police in Camarines Sur.

Grateful wife

Cyril Tana, the 19-year-old wife of Bantuk, was thankful after receiving the news that her husband had surrendered and was alive.

"I am still confused at the turn of events and I really don't know what to think of," the young mother said as she cradled in her arms their 2-month-old baby.

Francisco Tana, father of Cyril, said that he hardly knew his son-in-law.

He said all he knew was that the handsome suspect did not even know the exotic shows.

He said that Bantuk would only hang around the house and from time to time go out to the village square where he played basketball games.

Francisco said that he once asked his son-in-law to help him in his farm work but he told him he did not know how to work in the farm.

Knows little about husband

Cyril said she did not even know the real name of her husband's family.

She said that he had not even told her where he worked and that she did not bother to ask. Sonia Reyes Jr., PDI Visayas Bureau

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Bombing suspect 'could dunk'

[illegible] the Sgt. Rolando Andaya said: "He could dunk."

Of course, the councilor and other residents in town never know of his alleged shadowy back ground.

No one knew he was a suspect in the deadly bombing of a passenger bus in Makati on Feb. 14.

Taking a bride

Bantuk had taken a local lass for his bride in Libmanan town, and the couple gave birth to a child on Jan. 31, local officials said.

According to police intelligence, Bantuk, 24, is a regular member of the Abu Sayyaf Group under Abu Solaiman's command.

He was born in 1982 in Balocaue, Camarines City.

He allegedly recruited Carmel "Tepet" Santarsa and Angelo Trinidad, alias Abu Khalil, said to the explosive expertise used to carry out the Makati bombing.

The police said Abu Solaiman recruited him sometime in 2000. He started training in June 2004 on "practical, or execution and explosives course (for) three months," according to a police brief on his profile.

Police Director Rafael Delfin, the police's top intelligence official, said he trained in a mountainous area in Mariner City several. He only after three days of walking.

Construction worker

After the training, ninth grader suffers cracked him to a hotel in Iligan City. He was with a certain "Bernan," the brief said.

Then they went to Metro Manila and stayed at the Sig. ned Village in Taguig.

Sometime last year, he applied as a construction worker at in Pandacan and stayed in the area for three months, the brief said.

In November, the police said he received instruction from Abu Khalil "to explore the safety of explosives and fuses (there) at the Mabuhilis Hi. ghts in Taguig."

Order given

On Feb. 13, a day before the deadly bus bombing, he met with Abu Khalil and received orders at a gasoline station in FTI, Taguig.

He was instructed to bring the explosives home made (during the meeting)," the brief said.

The materials included eight kilos of TNT, a tracker device, another half of black powder, two handguns, a cell phone, 10 pieces of detonators and other bomb materials, the brief said.

Taguig Police chief Supt. Ramon Reyes said another bombing suspect, Jomar Antalik, had told the police that he and Bantuk left a bag of explosives in a billiards center in Taguig days after the Makati bombing.

The bag, Reyes said, contained 1.8 kilos of pentachloric powder, two kilos of TNT, and several other bomb materials.

"This (kind of firepower) can destroy a three-story building—about five or six times stronger than the bomb in the Makati," Reyes told the reporters.

2 Boy Negros

Director Delfin clarified yesterday that there are at least two "Boy Negro" in the police's files.

Both are Abu Sayyaf members, he said.

Delfin said the police were definite that the Boy Negro arrested in Bicol was not the one they had been looking for.

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The WORLD

Editor Lawrence B. Ibarra

Iran starts building new nuclear plant

VIENNA—Iran has started building a research reactor that could eventually produce enough plutonium for one bomb per year, ignoring calls to scrap the project, diplomats close to the United Nations said on Thursday.

"Iran has laid the foundations for the research reactor at Arak," a Western diplomat close to the UN International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said on condition of anonymity.

In September, the IAEA board of governors passed a resolution calling on Iran "as a further confidence-building measure, voluntarily to reconsider its decision to start construction of a research reactor modified by heavy water."

Heavy-water reactors can be used to produce significant amounts of bomb-grade plutonium, which can then be extracted from the spent fuel.

Iran also says it wants to break UN seals and test "essential" parts for machines for routine work, diplomats said.

They said this showed Iran's former air anxiety which could produce atomic weapons would be short-lived.

The Western diplomats, who are close to talks between Iran and the European Union's "big three"—France, Britain and Germany—said the Iranians had made this request despite the EU's assurances that it keep its promise to refrain from any and all activities linked to uranium enrichment.

"Iran wants to expand quality control checks and maintenance of 'non-essential' enrichment-related parts to 'essential' enrichment parts that have been installed by the IAEA under the suspension," a diplomat close to the EU-Iran talks said on condition of anonymity.

Iran has already provoked sharp US and EU criticism by conducting quality control tests of a so-called "non-essential" parts for centrifuges. Iran's voluntary freeze of sensitive nuclear work took effect in November.

But in a significant shift in strategy toward an arch enemy, President George W. Bush was leaning toward backing Europe in offering incentives to Iran, US officials said.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said the European negotiations with Iran were heading in the "right direction" and Washington was weighing how best to support them.

Diplomats on the IAEA 35-member board, as well as diplomats close to the IAEA, said they learned the boundaries for Iran's research reactor had been laid from photos taken by a commercial satellite.

The United States and other countries critical of Iran have questioned the need for the reactor, which is expected to be ready the end of this decade at the earliest.

"Iran has provided changing and contradictory rationales to the IAEA for this project, which would be well suited for plutonium production," the head of the US delegation to the IAEA meeting, Jackie Sanders, told the IAEA board on Wednesday.

Iranian officials were not available for comment. Reuters

THE PRINCESS and Prince of Wales on their wedding day in London on July 29, 1981.

Diana supporters protest Charles' plan to remarry

SYDNEY—Two protesters opposed to British Prince Charles' coming marriage stood out "disgust" and held up a placard showing pictures of Camilla Parker Bowles after the crown prince was met with hundreds of well wishers in Sydney.

Charles appeared to notice the demonstration against his scheduled wedding in April to longtime companion Camilla Parker Bowles, but ignored it.

A member of the prince's security detail and Gov. Marie Bashir, the British Queen's representative in New South Wales state, tried to block the placard from view as the prince shook hands and chatted with members of the crowd.

Bashir described the demonstrators' action as "cruel" and "very unrestrained."

Charles was in Sydney during a five-day whirlwind tour of Australia that has been overshadowed by secrecy of his plan to marry Parker Bowles, which last upset some observers because their romance began before Diana was killed in a 1997 car crash.

Some of the people who saw the protest outside Sydney's landmark Opera House did not support it.

"I think he should be able to enjoy his life," said enthusiast Greg Herbert, 43, said of Charles' plans to wed Parker Bowles on April 8.

Michael Seville, a 30-year-old nurse from Oxford in England, agreed saying, "It doesn't have to be long before the son of his first marriage he should give way to become."

The royal tour—Charles' first to Australia in more than a decade—has sparked renewed debate here over whether the former British penal colony should withdraw from the Commonwealth and become a republic.

Australians are now nominally subjects of the British crown and Queen Elizabeth II is Australia's head of state.

A recent newspaper poll showed that Australians were more inclined to support the country becoming a republic when reminded that Prince Charles would become the next head of state with Parker Bowles, his longtime mistress, as his wife. AP

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Many of world's women worse off today than 10 years ago, report says

UNITED NATIONS—A new report by women in 150 countries concludes that many women all over the world are worse off today than they were 10 years ago and accuses governments of failing to keep their pledges to achieve equality of the sexes.

Conservatively worldwide lack ambitious "piecemeal and incremental" approach to furthering women's rights that comes whenever the goals in the landmark platform of action adopted by 189 nations at the 1995 UN women's conference in Beijing, it says.

The 207-page report, the fifth compiled by the Women's Environment and Development Organization since helping, delivers a strong message. "The women of the world don't need any more words from their governments...they want action, they want results," the report said.

"Governments must be held accountable for their failure to implement the Beijing platform. Governments must be held accountable for their failure to implement the Beijing platform. Governments must be held accountable for their failure to implement the Beijing platform.

80M Africans may die from AIDS by 2025, says United Nations report

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia—More than 80 million Africans may die from AIDS by 2025, the United Nations said in a report released Friday, and 140 nations would lose 90 million—or more than 10 percent of the continent's population—if more aggressive action to fight the disease...

More than 20 million Africans have already been infected with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. UNAIDS estimated that nearly US$200 billion (some P11.34 billion) is needed to treat 16 million people living with AIDS and 43 million people from becoming infected, but donors have pledged nowhere near that amount.

In its report "AIDS in Africa," the UN agency examines three possible scenarios for the continent in the next 20 years, depending on the international community's contribution to fighting the epidemic.

Bureaucrats determined that even with massive funding and home treatment, the number of African who will die from the virus is likely to top 67 million.

"What we do today will change the future," concluded the report, drawn up by some of the world's leading experts on HIV and AIDS. "There are many dependencies that, while uncertain will have to deal with AIDS in some sense or other, the extent of the epidemic's impact will depend on the responses and investment now."

The three scenarios include a best-case situation, a middle-case and a doomsday scenario. They all warn that the worst of the epidemic's ravages is still to come.

"The scenarios are not predictions, they are plausible stories about the future," UNAIDS chief Dr Peter Piot said. "The scenarios highlight the various choices that are likely to confront African countries in the coming decades."

"There is no single policy prescription that will change the outcome of the epidemic," he concluded simply. "Decisions will still continue to cost us money what is done."

Under the worst-case scenario, projected infection rates in adults and funding rates the same as decades.

"It offers a disturbing window on the future death toll across the continent, with the cumulative number of people dying from AIDS increasing more than fourfold," it says. "The number of children orphaned by the epidemic will continue to rise beyond 2025."

AIDS already has a devastating impact on the continent. AP

FLYING RECORD Gleeful pilot Steve Fossett waves to the crowd March 3 at the Salina Municipal Airport in Salina, Kan., after touching down and becoming the first person to fly a round the world plane without stopping or refueling.

Pope improving, but weeks away from discharge

VATICAN CITY—Pope John Paul II's health is improving after the surgeon to ease his breathing but there is no set date for his discharge from hospital, Vatican spokesperson Joaquin Navarro-Valls said Thursday.

It may be some weeks before the 84-year-old Pope's discharge, he indicated, saying only it was "possible" he would leave hospital before Easy Easter, which falls this year on March 27.

"It's possible, but it's not in a position yet—still in intensive care," Navarro-Valls said in response, adding that John Paul II "really wants to go home."

He said the Pope, who is in hospital for the second time since he was elected as Rome's Cardinal-Archbishop on Feb. 16, "is fully aware of the gravity of the [his] case and the life of the Church" through his contact with "several of his collaborators" who had been visiting him.

Vatican sources said Wednesday that he was also having the Holy Mass of Ashes—symbolically the most painful period of his own ...would be no shows compared to last year.

"That will be decided when the Pope gets back to the Vatican," the spokesperson said.

After remaining from Feb. 11, the Pope was rushed to hospital once again late with a recurrence of some breathing problems, which doctors alleviated by performing a tracheotomy (inserting a breathing tube through a surgical cut in the neck).

That landed the Holy Father, John Paul II, a controversial tracheotomy to recuperate. As previously noted, the Pope is eating regularly and spends several hours each day in recreation," Vatican Valls said in a statement.

The wound from the throat surgery "is healing," he said.

John Paul II, who is also suffering from Parkinson's disease, is "actively participating" in daily rehabilitation sessions for his speaking and breathing, Navarro-Valls told reporters.

The spokesperson said he would confirm on Saturday when he the pope would pastor's post in the Sunday Angelus. AFP

Huge pedophile trial opens in western France

ANGERS, France—One of France's biggest ever criminal trials—a case in which 56 men and women are accused of raping children "sold" by their parents for pocket sums of money and cigarettes—opened Thursday in the town (city) of Angers.

The accused are suspected of the sex assaults and of being found in a specially constructed wooden hall in the low-rent district to accommodate the 60 lawyers, many of the 40 victims, and the accused, who face sentences ranging up to life imprisonment if convicted.

Most lawyers are involved in the trial, and the 450-page prosecution case will take four days to read out to the three judges and the nine jurors are to be selected.

Proceedings are closed to the public but televised for press purposes. Of the victims, who have been identified female, police blocked the street and few minutes watched with hesitancy as the defendants arrived in a number of vans.

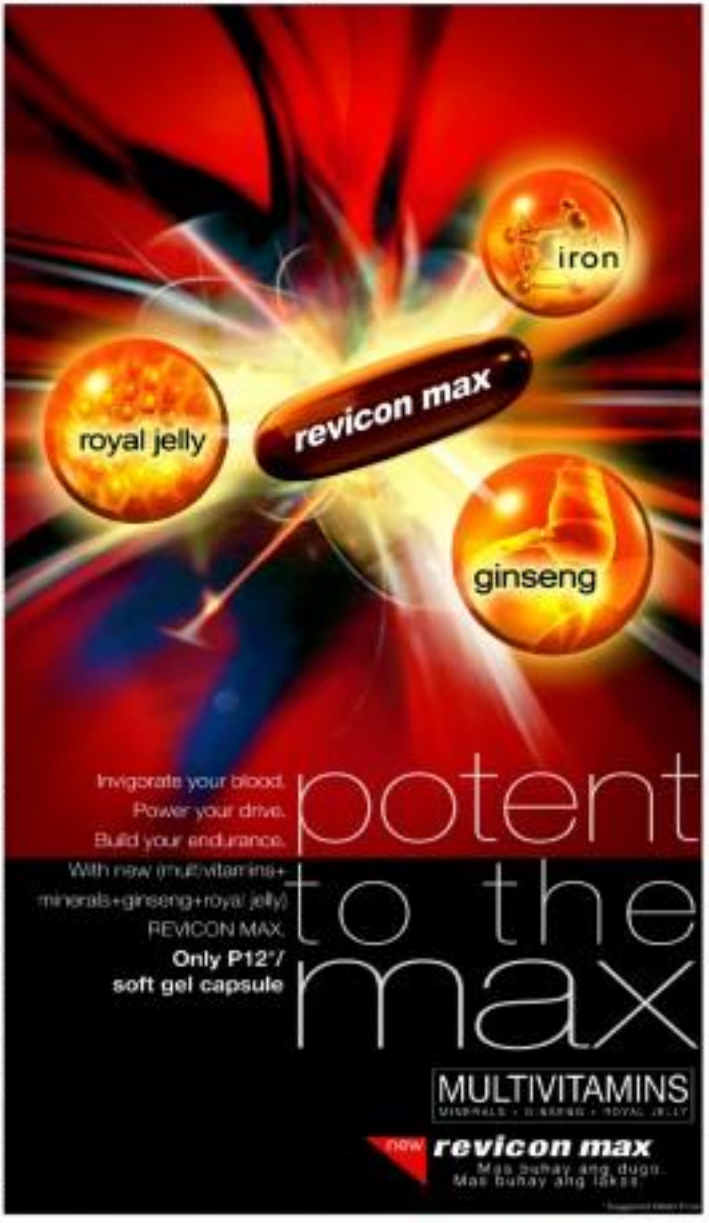
The accused include the lured from the victims, who were aged from six months to 12 years at the time. Six have divorced a plaintiff for rape members will have access to a special jury closure room.

"I expect that five of the children will be [silenced to] cry" said Alain Bougrier, one of the lawyers for the victims, outside the court, house. "They know what happened."

Details of the allegations against the 39 men and 17 women make startling reading.

All come from the poorest and least urban social sections of society, and lived in the Saint-Leonard quarter of Angers, a largely ghetto and leafy historic town.

Interrogators were alerted to the network when they decided to keep tabs on Eric Jouan, a 43-year-old metal and accordion salesman in 1999 who was supposed to be undergoing a course of psychiatric treatment for sexual offenses. French tv reports, he stopped in have founded the ring. AFP



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Hara-kiri

EDITORIAL

THE SUGGESTION from Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago that, in the midst of the controversial passage of the national budget, our senators and congressmen alike commit *hara-kiri* as "the best public service to the people," is not only melodramatic. It is also redundant.

For in the last few days, both houses of Congress have all but self-destructed. The members of the upper chamber may think that to the rest of perceptions they have gained the advantage, but their victory is only apparent, and resolution from the House all but contain. As for the congressmen, they miscalculated badly; and they are now agonizing over the consequences of unexpected defeat.

But they are not mourning their losses on the PR battlefield. In fact, in the last two days, congressmen have essentially given up the PR game, preferring instead to fight for keeps, regardless of how the public may perceive them.

It is no secret that it is the pork barrel they are fighting for.

When the Senate voted on Tuesday to adopt the House version of the 2005 budget, in fact, on the prodding of Finance committee chair Sen. Manuel Villar, Speaker Jose de Venecia, who was abroad, immediately released a statement claiming victory. The Senate's move, De Venecia said, "proves the supremacy of the House in budget-making and the wisdom of the House position."

Three days after, of course, this statement is deservedly ridiculed. Because no one else in the House was in the mood to claim victories for its version of the budget. In fact, many congressmen have said quite the opposite.

The other day, some of them even went to the extent of calling for the abolition of the Senate. House Majority Leader Prospero Nograles spoke for many of his colleagues when he said the country would be "in a better state if it has a single parliament, with each member representing a clearly defined constituency." Kampi Rep. Jose Solis also described the Senate as "an appendix of Congress," and then called for an emergency appendectomy.

Their reasoning is simplicity itself. If the Senate cannot improve on the House version of a bill, if—as in this instance—it adopts a House measure without any revisions, then perhaps there is really no need for another chamber of Congress in the first place.

But in the depths of their frustration, Nograles et al. forget that the public can read between the lines. Congressmen want the Senate abolished—not merely because the Senate adopted their version of the budget, but because by doing so, it robbed them of the opportunity to nurture their pork barrel funds (reduced to P90 million per representative) to the original amount (some P75 million each).

Santiago said House leaders were merely waiting for the bicameral conference committee to begin meeting, before negotiating the amounts upward. "They got what they wanted because they said this is the budget, so why are they angry? You have to analyze this in a deeper level—they wanted to do something in the bloom that they can no longer do," she told reporters.

But Santiago was not present when the Senate voted to adopt the House version on Tuesday. The more likely reason why her colleagues in the Senate decided to accept the House measure was the precise opposite: they saw that the House wanted to avoid a bicameral conference committee meeting at all costs.

The result of a long-enough delay would have been reenactment, for the second time, of the 2003 budget. Not coincidentally, in that budget, pork barrel funds for House members were set at P70 million each.

It is no wonder that, as word of the Senate maneuver spread, one congressman after another acted as if he had been given the final sword to commit political *seppuku*.

New door to peace

FOREIGN COMMENT

THE FALL of the Lebanese government in the midst of mass protests demonstrations against the ongoing Syrian occupation was a refreshing surprise. Israel seemed to underestimate the developments in the region, which could have an enormous influence on its national security.

The developments over the northern border oblige Jerusalem to reconsider its policy of many years that already agrees to Syrian control of Lebanon. The Syrian Heights remain a "deposit" for a future peace agreement, in which the final border between Israel and Syria will be determined and the two states will have normal relations. That would be Israel's contribution to the lasting order in the north.

Ha'aretz (Tel Aviv, Israel)

Judicial notice

SEPARATE OPINION

Isagani A. Cruz

ON JAN. 27, 2004, former Vice President Salvador H. Laurel died at the United States. This was widely reported in the country's newspapers, on radio and television, and by word of mouth among the people at large. He was the subject of editorials and opinion columns and many sociological services, including the one held officially at the Senate, for he had served as a member. In Proclamation No. 344 dated Jan. 28, 2004, President Macapagal-Arroyo, through Executive Secretary Alberto G. Romulo, extended living recognition to Laurel, designated a period of national mourning for him, and authorized his interment at the Libingan ng mga Bayani.

At the time of his death, Laurel was facing a criminal case in the Sandiganbayan, where he had instituted for a reinvestigation, which was granted by the 7th Division of the Sandiganbayan. On Aug. 29, 2004, it issued the following Order:

"Considering that this case is still under reinvestigation in the Office of the Special Prosecutor, and notwithstanding the fact of which the Court takes judicial notice, that Vice-President Salvador H. Laurel is already dead, the Court hereby directs the Office of the Special Prosecutor to withdraw reinvestigation and to submit its resolution thereon at the earliest possible time." (Emphasis supplied.)

Succeeding to the Rights of Court, among the subjects of judicial notice without the introduction of proof are "the official acts of the legislative, executive and judicial departments" and "all matters known within the limits of public knowledge."

On Dec. 28, 2004, the same Division ordered as follows:

"Considering that the Court has not yet been furnished with a copy of the death certificate of accused Salvador H. Laurel, the pre-trial set for today is hereby cancelled and reset to January 28, 2005 at 2:00 o'clock in the afternoon." (Stress supplied.)

The latest Order from the Division dated Jan. 28, 2005, is awaited in utmost language and says:

"When this case was called this afternoon, Atties Amy Ann A. Dilweras for Mrs. Gina C. Sta. Ana, counsel for the accused, appeared. Hence, Atty. Dilweras and/or Ana are hereby directed to submit within ten (10) days from receipt hereof why they should not be cited in contempt of Court for their failure to appear for today's pre-trial despite due notice. They are also directed to submit to this Court a certified copy of the death of accused Salvador H. Laurel." (Emphasis mine.)

The Order was signed by Justice Ma. Cristina D. Gomez-Estoesta as chair, Roland B. Jurado and Teresita D. Diaz-Baligad as members.

Although perplexed, Dilweras and Ana dutifully filed their Explanation, where they respectfully submitted that their representation as lawyers of the late Salvador H. Laurel was fully terminated upon their former client's death.

They invoked jurisprudence that "a dead client has no personality and cannot be represented by an attorney." (Lorbes v. Court of Appeals, 127 SCRA 681, citing Barcenas v. Barcenas, 30 Phil. 756; and Gaviyo Calimpan, 101 Phil. 1168.)

They added that "the attorney for a party ceases to be the attorney of such party upon the death of the latter." (Lawas v. Court of Appeals, 144 SCRA 173, citing People v. Flores, 77 Phil. 14.)

May I add that even under the ordinary rules on agency in general, among the causes for the extinguishment of the attorney's authority over his principal or the agent. (Civil Code, Art. 1919.)

As required, they furnished the Division a copy of the Death Certificate of Salvador H. Laurel issued by the County of San Mateo, California, USA. They also sent a Xerox Power from to Sandra Sorbello Agency for his cremation pending when a Request of Death and an Affidavit regarding the disposition of such remains executed by our own Consul General Delia Ilethel Reyes.

As an added precaution, they also attached a copy of Proclamation No. 344 just to show the Division had not read or at least wasn't aware of it.

As the Division had already taken judicial notice of Laurel's death in its Order dated Aug. 29, 2004, one can only wonder why it still challenged my widowed late lawyer-lawyers to submit copies of the death certificate.

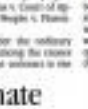
The justices, as supreme members of the judiciary, would not have been unaware of the jurisprudence cited by Messrs. Jose and Oliveros. That is why I cannot understand the threat in that Order viewed the lawyers who had earnestly assumed that their services for the late Laurel had already terminated with his death.

I would agree that the details of an ordinary client, of which judicial notice cannot be taken, must be reported by the former lawyer for the information of the court. But former Vice-President Salvador H. Laurel was no ordinary client, no less than the President of the Philippines, whose death had been of the talk of the nation, knew of his death.

Submission of the required Explanation with all the interest that facts involved not to unreasonable size and cognizant that could have been avoided if the members of the Fifth Division had not wantonly preoccupied themselves with the trivial issues in the case. May I say, with all due respect, that the more serious questions before their Division should have claimed their professional attention.

Checkmate

GET REAL



Solita Collas-Monsod

MINISTER Defensor-Santiago has the right of it. Her plea (to be "the sacrificial lamb that the best public service that legislators can perform is to commit suicide," Sen. Magsaysay, the congressman from Davao City, has the wrong of it, and doesn't go far enough: he says there should be only one chamber in Congress, meaning, a unicameral Congress, and under a parliamentary system at that.

What is the situation that gave rise to these opinions? It's hard to make heads or tails of it, but let's give it a try.

Let's start with that point where the House of Representatives sent the 2005 budget bill to the Senate in December, way late to be approved by January. That meant that the 2004 budget had to be considered reenacted. So the argument, except that the 2004 budget was itself a reenacted 2003 budget. Already there was complaint that the Senate didn't have the authority there main responsibility to enact a budget that would ensure the achievement of development objectives.

The Senate looks it over, passes its own version of the bill and tries to get the House to convene in bicameral conference committee to iron out the differences in the two versions. The House can't seem to find the time.

The Senate gets nervous. Unless the bicameral conference agrees on a final version of the 2005 budget by the last quarter-ending January break, the 2005 budget, which was reenacted for 2004, will be limited reenacted for the second year. It is now shaping a summary of any developmental plans and confirming that the legislature is at least a co-equal branch of government.

But the House doesn't seem interested—by claiming that the Senate has been doing some fiscal pogo of its own, realigning P1.5 billion from intelligence funds to the pork barrel, I am told. Called here to stand on differentiated principles, the Senate finds that the intelligence funds were indeed touched, but not to reduce them, just to reinstate P1.5 billion into maintenance and operating funds. One the same purpose but to ensure more transparency and accountability.

At this point, the Senate decides that since its main objective is to get a 2005 budget passed, rather than wrestle with a reenacted budget, it must swallow its pride (after all, it worked out its own version for two months) and adopt in toto the House version.

When I first heard about the decision, my reaction was to throw up my hands and wonder why the senators didn't just do that from the very beginning. I thought the Senate was abnegating its powers and responsibilities. It didn't sit well with me—because while the differences between the two chambers may at times be almost negligible, it seemed to me that, more often than not, the Senate has acted more responsibly than the House.

The House reaction to the Senate move was, to say the least, startling. One would have thought that they would give themselves self-satisfied pats on the back and hope their version was adopted in toto. One would have expected them to say that this goes to show that the Senate has realized its usefulness, by reducing itself to merely drawing House sections.

But no. House members were angry at the Senate because it didn't "give anything." Grandstanding? The Senate agrees totally with the House version of the budget, and yet seems grandstanding?

There there were the accusations that the senators did this in direct retaliation from the Lacson "revelations" that showed up the 200 on their faces—they had seemed to maximize their pork barrel and were caught in the act. Thus doesn't wash either (pardon the pun). The Senate version, until it was distributed, did not increase the pork barrel allocations—if anything, some senators (e.g. Pimentel, Lacson, Biazon) gave them up.

There were also calls, like the one from Nograles, for the Senate to be abolished, not for being useless, but for "grandstanding"—at the expense of the House, and here comes another new negative characterization of senators as parliamentary queers. The demise of these legislators would be a nightmare for the country—a parliamentary system would give more not only legislative powers (which they already have) but executive powers (which they are sure to abuse, right and left...with no more checks and balances).

But I digress. The new logical question is, if these accusations hurled by the House hold no water, why did the Senate simply throw in the towel, adopt the House version of the 2005 budget?

The real reason: Sometimes the depths of stupidity and self-interest that some legislators are capable of it seems can stun the House majority to relax the pork barrels back to their original levels (which, I think, they're trying to fine-tune now). Plus, they could postpone the bicameral sessions on the budget until after they passed the 900 bill, thus earning immense points with the President, to be used to support her candidacy in 2010. Either push, her vote that she had "given up" in the original House version. That was Plan A.

If Plan A failed, Plan B would still be a win situation. If the Senate refused to restore the pork barrel cuts, there would be an impasse, and the 2003 cuts, the 2004 budget—where the pork barrel allocations were at their original, intact levels—would be reenacted for 2005.

Neat, huh? Except for one thing. Both Plan A and B required a bicameral conference meeting. The Senate, by adopting the House version, bypassed it. The ball is in their court now, Chuck and Jackhouse.

Congratulations, Senate.

Indolence did it

POLITICAL TIDBITS
Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

FABULOUS, this column noted the speculation among Senate observers that the reason the Senate suddenly passed the House version of the budget in one day and without amendments on Feb. 27, bypassing the bicameral conference committee, was to shorten the session by one day. Pacifico Lacson's report, Lacson had alleged in a speech before Senary members that his colleagues cut out the P1.3 billion intelligence budget only to realign it at their pork barrel allocations. I shared with some senatorial colleagues my guess to give me the impression that the success to remain for the three coalition bipartisan votes on the House budget. Neither was it the desire to grace President Bongbong Arroyo's birthday on March 2 by passing the budget before then, just wanted to go on vacation starting March 31. "It's indolence that does," this reliable source just told me.

* * *

What about Lacson's accusation? My Senate sources push pushed it, saying it was the opposition senators, like Juan Ponce Enrile and Lacson himself, who kept objecting to the P1.3-billion line item for the intelligence funds of the Office of the President's executive officials. There, said one source, what the senators did was to "technically" cut the P1.3 billion fund into specific items—such as the presidential fund for rewards, which was increased to P500 million—but it could be audited—unlike before when no one could poke into their funds. The senators flatly deny that they sought to realign it to their pork barrels. "Sore Lacson is singing a different tune!" is one line they are using to tease the Senate members who would have benefited from their P1.3 billion realignment. But now the matter is moot and academic.

* * *

From the way the senators see it, if we House committee chair Manuel Villar who proposed this "surprise move," like he first checked out things, dissecting from his experience as floor speaker of the House who knows the ins and outs of the bicameral Congress members. From Gaston Ance, the Senate official in charge of securing visas for senators, he dominus learned that as many of them had planned to leave for abroad right after the March 10 adjournment. Sen. Lito Lapid is reportedly bound for San Diego, California, while Sen. Ramon Revilla Jr. is going to Los Angeles, a second home to him. Senate President Franklin Drilon normally spends his favorite break in his hometown with his family. Other lawmakers plan to go to Europe and South America.

* * *

Villar asked colleagues to approve the House budget so they could go on leave soon. If not, he argued, it will take another two months or so for bicameral level; moreover, deliberations on the bill will eat up time to start this Monday because it would be hard to get anyone on the budget. Some senators balked at first. A common reaction was why they had to conduct hearings for two and a half weeks—meeting, afternoon and evening—only to come up with practically the same Room 518. Sen. Roxas felt the Senate inputs were put to naught. Sen. Ralph Recto, who chairs the ways and means committee that's sponsoring the new SSS bills, feared that the House lawmakers would trade their votes for the Senate version for budget realignments to get the two SSS bills approved. Recto realized that if the budget bill was not approved, he would be standing in front of the chamber's dais for the "SSS for" two months "It's a damned-if-you-do, damned-if-you-don't situation," he was quoted as saying.

* * *

Villar agreed to this characterization, stating "Pumipilitan nun lang sina *ex Jue de Tenedos* (2/3) has been saying with us)," referring to accusations that 2/3 had instructed his hops to bypass the liaison conference on the budget to have a Senate bill approved. Villar also noted that House appropriations chair Rolando Andaya Jr. had legitimate reason to the passage of the budget bill long. Andaya did not attend the Wednesday of-session dinner of the "Wednesday Club," the group of senators who were since House representatives. Andaya is one of the two associate members of this group (the other is Pangasinan Secretary Mikhail Defensor). So four presidentiables in Vice President Noli de Castro who still attends regularly, interestingly the night she had not been appointed by Pres. Arroyo. Andaya apparently showed up at the club dinner at the Heritage Hotel, and was busily selling the values, "Pirmeng sabihonsabi ako ng mga."

* * *

Villar proposed the liaison to Senate President Franklin Drilon, Belmonte at first, the Senate chief suggested that the measure be considered. To all his business colleagues, Villar had only one question: What's your choice? The read which the President calling a special session for SSS during the Holy Week, or right after Easter? So compelling was the idea that in the afternoon, the Senate suspended the regular session to distribute the House version. The remarkable thing is that it did not even take one and a half hours to get the concurrence of the senators. The fate of House travel was simply irresistible!

* * *

Some senators are now justifying their sudden action on the budget by saying they merely wanted to shorten the plan of the House to speak back to the one-hour speech. They were announced on P10 million from each congressman and P80 million from each senator.] By doing away with the forum, the senators say they saved the country about P1.8 billion or P11 billion, which it doesn't have anyway. For the House legislators, however, this is the ominous job of oil, coming from the senators at that. They point out that they passed the House version while the Senate took only three months ago. Reasoning that would not have swayed the senators' and the public's notice! The House people asserted that the senators, in quote they, "Pabibitin' Lacson." "were caught with their hands in the cookie jar."

Caring for Cholo

YOUNG BLOOD
Jerilee Granada

My parents were hugging my baby brother, resting him to sleep, as tears streamed down my mom's face. The doctor had just told us my brother was afflicted with autism, a brain disorder that impedes one's interest, social and sometimes physical, abilities. It has no known cause, doctors. Autism, as my parents tried to put my brother Cholo to sleep, they and I were being fed helpless and hopeless.

I remember that scene as events become what my parents felt I was feeling, too.

It has been 18 years since. The Lord has been our family's strength and we have learned to count hope-lessness into hopefulness and extraordinary into positive action. We have accepted the pains—and the joys—that come with having a "special child" in the family.

Autism individuals have different views and attributes, each one manifesting unique attitude patterns in Cholo is what interests me the most. He can speak and can tell a little stories. Although his education has been delayed, he has been through a normal academic program in school. What a lot of words are his social skills. He has difficulty engaging in a normal conversation, like telling stories and jokes, and he does not mingle and play with other kids.

Cholo also has unusually monotonous and habits that others often find odd or, at times, annoying, he jumps and flaps his hands when excited. He also constantly mentions someone's phone or tries to memorize text in the TV theme.

Autism individuals usually mean certain places, where they talk to a particular person for a period of time. Cholo has had a "new everything you can get your hands on" phase. He would save a couple of cell phones and my other brother's Playstation. Now he is into a "photo-taking" phase, where our own organized photo albums have been turned into a colored-sketched-by-Cholo.

In dealing with Cholo, patience is not only a virtue, it is a necessity. But really, we just cannot win mad at him despite his misbehavior. How can we, when he destroys our whole bags and shoes and doesn't stop saying sorry until you give him the thumbs-up sign and assure him that he is a "good boy no"? He sometimes will even ask for forgiveness in his own way. He would save a couple of cell phones and my other brother's Playstation. Now he is into a "photo-taking" phase, where our own organized photo albums have been turned into a colored-sketched-by-Cholo.

In dealing with Cholo, patience is not only a virtue, it is a necessity. But really, we just cannot win mad at him despite his misbehavior. How can we, when he destroys our whole bags and shoes and doesn't stop saying sorry until you give him the thumbs-up sign and assure him that he is a "good boy no"? He sometimes will even ask for forgiveness in his own way.

Everything has been under control for the past years, we have taught ourselves to adjust to the complications and to live accordingly to Cholo's needs.

But recently, things took quite an alarming turn. Cholo has been experiencing severe leg cramps, tic attacks and cries in pain. At first, we assumed that this was caused by his hyperactive nature. We had him checked by pediatricians, who said that there was nothing wrong physically with Cholo. But they also told us that there is a neurological disorder that takes on a positive behavior for a period of time, therefore had a "new everything you can get your hands on" phase

Is there hope amid graft?

DOE secretary is slowly but surely sinking deeper in the quagmire of poverty and corruption.

The value-added tax (VAT) will not solve our economic problems. It will only contribute our scarcity, what with the resulting increase in the prices of primer commodities. Oil prices keep on rising. Petroleum tax has also recently increased with our economists crisis far from being over.

At the 5th, 10 years of the revolution, it was reported that rich businessmen are not paying taxes or if at all, they pay a little, just an assessment of tax, expert Victor Abella, a tax professor of the University of Asia and the Pacific.

It is astounding that there is a glimpse of a bright future for our economy ushered in by the 8th June decision of the Supreme Court allowing foreign companies to invest in the mining industry coupled with oil discovery in the Sulu Sea which experts said by war or time. Blackness and the electricity.

But how do we fill ourselves from the quicksand of poverty where most of our countrymen in Congress are yearning for more pork? Why not tax the Indian nationals who are making a fortune from sidewalk vendors?

—BENJAMIN C. DE LA FUENTE,
3125 Hammerskin St.,
Sta. Cruz, Manila

Nothing to do with corruption

THE editor in the Feb. 12 editorial of Bulletin Ulimwa Catanuan, wherein she cited as a failure of the Church the Philippines' being notorious for having too many scraps of blinds in government.

I don't think the Church is remiss in reminding the faithful about the consequences of sin.

If the government goes after the corrupt and punish them, firmly and decisively, then we can stop corruption. If people in government are efficient being executed for plunder, chances are they will say the punishment is just too harsh, not worth the reward. That, I believe, is the way we can stop corruption in this country.

Let's study the cases of countries with a very low rate of corruption like Singapore. It really has nothing to do with religion.

—SALVADOR CARANTO JR.,
10 Beverly Hills Ave.,
Beverly Hills, Antipolo City

LETTERS

SSS claim resolved

THIS is in reference to the letter of Lydia V. Bihar which was published in the Feb. 25 issue of the Inquirer.

Mihar complained against the alleged inaction of the Social Security System on the funeral benefit of her son, Alex Mihar.

Mihar's funeral benefit of P1,000 was approved on Jan. 31. A check has been mailed to this article and sent to Baga City, Negros Occidental.

For further details, we advise Mihar to coordinate with our branch in Baga City.

—REY P. SALAZAR,
assistant vice president,
Media Affairs Department,
Social Security System,
East Avenue, Diliman, QC

Supreme Court decision sought

I AM related to the late Supreme Court Justice Antonio E. de Jesus, his "13" standing for Elizondo, my surname. Justice De Jesus resigned from the Supreme Court—to then President Elpidio Quirino's surprise—explaining that he was going back to law practice because his salary as Supreme Court Associate Justice was not enough to meet the needs of his growing family. Back to law practice he did, establishing a flourishing one in Escolta, Manila.

Today, more than 50 years after, I see many lawyers who claim to be making a bundle in their law practice defying appointments to the Supreme Court. Why? Is the salary of a Supreme Court Justice so big to entice many practicing lawyers to apply as consultants?

By the way, I serve with a friend and overseas buyer—Bonny Silvers, Jr. of Barangay Bulacan, Iligan City—last December 2004 to Barangay Cadre, Compos, Lugo, as to buy the CARP farmer beneficiaries' coconut harvest. I was surprised that these farmer beneficiaries' case has been pending with the Supreme Court for more than 11 years now! According to the farmers and their leaders, they do not know of any reason why the Supreme Court has not decided the case (GR 113326). Has there finally been compromise, Corp. v. Court of Appeals et al.).

They say the Valeo (landowners) already submitted during the oral arguments before the Supreme Court case they did not possess evidence that the land is CARP-exempt. So, what's taking the Supreme Court so long to decide the case? That's where so many influential people are interested in getting the land.

I appeal to Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr. to pay the RI CARP beneficiaries' tenacity and look into this case. I know my relative Justice De Jesus would not tolerate such delay. I believe the good Chief Justice Davide would do the same.

—PERCY L. BONNAIR,
Barangay Tinago-an, Iligan City

No 'bakot' crowd

THIS is in reaction to the news item, "Gets super Filipinos to fight graft in government" (PDI, 2/25/05), in which it was reported that the Office of Internal Affairs required the mobilization of 30,000 employees from different government agencies for the celebration of the 19th anniversary of the 1986 People Power.

The private sending of our money to the heads of different government agencies, resulting in mobilization of 30,000 people as the Edsa People Power Monument on Feb. 22, 2005, from 12 to 7 p.m. (half active as one of the highlights of this year's commemoration."

The crowd estimate was based on the commissions made by various non-government and peoples' organizations at an anti-corruption forum held in Pen. 11.

The letter also stated: "We hope that you could watch the beneficiaries of your largesse to attend the said event." The quoted persons are self-explanatory.

The Feb. 22 rally at the Edsa People Power Monument served as the launching of the administration's reinvigorated campaign against graft and corruption. For the first time in the history of our country, we have a President who has the political will to fight corruption, as proven by the big and medium "fishes" jailed or hailed in court.

We decried not only government officials and employees and beneficiaries but also all sectors of Philippine society. We know that, to be able to successfully fight corruption, government must work hand in hand with all sectors.

The people went to Edsa on Feb. 22 to stand up against corruption, not only in government but in the private sector and the media as well. Corruption is deep-seated in our culture and only through unity can we hope to be victorious. We hope that the business is not with us in the struggle.

—LUZVIMINDO T. DAVID,
assistant secretary,
Office of Internal Affairs,
Office of the President,
Malacañang, Manila

THE OIA letter to different agencies was indeed self-explanatory. It was previously reported that Lauvimindo T. David's office had asked government offices to send people to the rally. In his own words—"we hope you could rejoin the thousands... in attend," "a mobilization of 30,000 people," etc., I believe it was plain to everyone what kind of rally it was. We need for probably, hence, we need for bad splitting.

—JULIET LARDO AVELLANA,
PDI reporter

Enemies of democracy

THERE can be no economic recovery and prosperity without peace. There can never be peace while rebels, insurgents and criminals—like the three National Liberation Front, Abu Sayyaf, Armado Islamiyah, New People's Army and other organized terrorist and criminal syndicates—roam freely and attack government forces and camps, rural and urban folk, business establishments and the peace-loving Filipinos. The government has its hands full fighting these criminals and Filipino soldiers are dying needlessly because the enemies of the state possess modern firearms and have powerful allies in government and the communities.

The call for a ceasefire in the Sulu fighting from some quarters only reveals that there are persons willing to sell out country down the river to attain their personal, selfish motives. The opposition has no cause to voice against these enemies of the state. It feels that if the talk turns against the government, it will favor the government. The opposition is terribly wrong. It will be the first to be eliminated by the terrorists and criminals.

The militants, leftists and "farmer-ng-bayan" with their incessant demonstrations and rallies against the government, have not raised their voices against the terrorists and criminals—they just seek the downfall of the government. They are traitors and media should use plaintive chairs in the newspapers and television.

We are fighting for the survival of our country, democracy and freedom against those who want to impose an authoritarian and dictatorial government, just like yours.

We cannot allow these enemies of democracy to use the democratic space to topple our democratic government and way of life.

—LEONCIO AMIO,
University of the Philippines,
Diliman, Quezon City

GMA turns down . . .

From page A1

and ensure the security of our communities," Mr Ayson said.

He said the first had ordered the military to summon operations "focused on apprehending or neutralizing the remaining leaders and members of the Abu Sayyaf, as well as other groups that have forged alliances with them."

Military advice

Military officials have repeatedly urged the President, who had drawn a coup attempt in 2003, not to declare a state of emergency.

"The government institutionally feelings the loss so many times," said one Army colonel who asked not to be identified.

"If she won't listen to us, she [martial] will overrule," he said.

The President commanded the military for taking control of 43 Abu island bases and reservations used by followers of Misuari and the Abu Sayyaf kidnap gang.

She said security forces and local officials would oversee the safe return of the thousands of people who fled the fighting and help them rebuild their communities.

The President also ordered the presidential advisor on the peace process "to hold consultations among military commanders, local officials, Muslim representatives to the Congress and religious and civil society leaders to consolidate the peace and maintain law and order" in Jolo.

To file criminal charges

She also said she had ordered police to file criminal complaints against those responsible for "these acts of terrorism."

In a press conference yesterday, Malacañang officials claimed the government had now taken control of Sulu and the operations there were now focused on pursuit of the remaining band of rebels led by Umbi Huber Misih and on rehabilitating and rebuilding the province.

They said a large delegation of officials would be flying to the province today to jump-start the process.

Defense Secretary Avelino Cruz said "smaller events" of police and military would be limiting down Misih and his gang who, Army chief Lt. Gen. Generoso Senga said, were "very mobile and difficult to pinpoint."

Rebels scattered

Most of the rebel MILF forces stationed after their headquarters was captured on Feb. 23 and the military has been concentrating its attention on the Abu Sayyaf in other parts of the island.

By the Army's count, 21 soldiers and up to 100 rebels have been killed in the fighting, which started when hundreds of rebels ambushed a convoy of soldiers.

Nearly 4,000 soldiers, including several hundred recent reinforcements, have been fighting about 800 militants from the al-Qaida-linked Abu Sayyaf group and regular members of the MILF.

Some members of the MILF splinter with a pledge that the group concluded with the government in 1996, have forged alliances with the Abu Sayyaf on Jolo, where both groups have strongholds.

Cruz said criminal complaints against Misih and other leaders would be filed in time to shore stocks' fines.

Asked if Misuari would be among those charged, Cruz only responded to question, saying the complaint would be "based on the evidence gathered by the military and police."

The wave fighting in the Philippines in two years has stirred tension across the country.

Abu Sayyaf spokesperson have claimed responsibility for three coordinated bomb attacks on Valentine's Day in the Mindanao cities of Davao and General Santos and in Makati, which killed 13 people and wounded more than 150.

A third suspect in the bombing had been arrested. (Story on Page A1.) —AFP, Reuters and UP with reports from Jodi V. Aspiras, PDI Mindanao Bureau, and Christina Jocson-Jocsin

AFP wants stiff . . .

From page A1

"They kill and bomb then Elements join them the opportunity overall. It's ongoing on the part of some media to allow those terrorists or people identified with terrorist groups to air their complaints," he went on.

The United States has blacklisted both the Abu Sayyaf and the Communist Party and its armed group, the New People's Army, as terrorist organizations.

Malacañang and other officials have also publicly branded the Abu Sayyaf as terrorists.

Adasa's logic

"The CPP-NPA outside terrorist acts. It is a terrorist group," Adasa told the Inquirer when pressed for clarification about the CPP-NPA status.

Asked if interviewing CPP personalities like chief Political Director Jose Sampaton Luis Jalandoni or Communist Party spokesperson Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal would make media reporters liable for prosecution, Adasa said: "We're not singling out persons, either because the law is generic."

"In the law we are referring to terrorist groups without any reference to any particular group."

Radio interviews

Adasa, in his talk, with respondents, railed against media organizations "who allow known terrorists or terrorist organizations to use their facilities to air anti-people, anti-state sentiments and incite the people to rebel against their government."

Government and military officials have complained in the past against media interviews with people they have tagged as "terrorists."

They were particularly flabbergasted when some radio stations would regularly interview Abu Sayyaf spokesperson Abu Sabaya until he was killed in an encounter with government forces in June 2002.

Recently, AFP officials also complained when some radio stations interviewed Hubert Misih, who led Moro National Liberation Front forces that attacked government troops in Jolo last month.

CPP's threat is also regularly interviewed by print and broadcast media.

Adasa clarified that what the military wanted banned were interviews with "known terrorists."

"We want strong penalties because those legitimately expressing their grievances and the terrorist," he said.

Adasa said without an antiterrorism legislation, law enforcers were hard put to stop terrorism.

"We need an antiterrorism law to decisively deal with, to disrupt terrorism from their alliances, their finances, to stop agitation and propaganda who are in favor of certain terrorist groups," he said.

RP is weakest link

"We are one of the weakest in terms of legal weapons in fighting terrorism because we have a sizable number of terrorist-linked groups and yet we don't have the law to deal with them decisively," Adasa added.

"We need tough laws in order to make sure that they go behind bars and prevent them from reorganizing again and being reinvented more they are released from short sentences," he said.

Adasa noted that the penalty for terrorist acts in some countries was "life imprisonment or death."

Under current laws, suspected terrorists are charged with illegal possession of firearms and explosives, allowing them to post bail, he said.

Punishable by death

"We want terrorists to be categorized as a heinous crime punishable by death," he said.

Adasa also said "illegal possession of high-powered firearms, high-caliber ammunition and explosives, in furtherance of terrorism or rebellion" should be punishable by death.

He added that the military also wants bought penalties for possession and use of military uniforms, paraphernalia and equipment.

He said, as examples, military uniforms captured by rebels during encounters.

"The mere possession of that will already serve as evidence that is pursued is involved with these terrorists," he said.

President Macapagal-Arroyo has asked Congress to remedy the perceived weakness in the law, but the proposed measures are meeting resistance from civil rights groups, which fear the law could be used to crack down on the political opposition.

Antiterrorism debates in other Southeast Asian countries allow for the indefinite detention of terrorist suspects.

Defense Secretary Avelino Cruz echoed Adasa's call, saying antiterrorism legislation would be a great help in the fight against militant groups. —Reuters/AFP report

Dinky: Sulu returning to normal

SOCIAL Welfare Secretary Dinky Soliman yesterday said the situation in Sulu was slowly returning to normal, with the number of refugees in various evacuation centers was down from a high of 89,000 to only 36,000. One third of the evacuees are children.

In an update that she gave the media on the Sulu conflict, Soliman said the fighting was now confined to Patikul and Indanan towns.

Many of the families which fled when the fighting started had returned to their homes, she said.

A few were, however, still "looking at the situation with fear" and refused to return until the war was over.

The refugees wanted the government to declare a ceasefire so they can start the rehabilitation process," Soliman said, adding that she could not comment on the proposal as it was solely a presidential decision.

P1.3-M relief aid

She said P1.7 million has so far been spent in relief assistance, with half of the amount coming from the local government and non-government organizations.

Teresita Quintos-Deles, the presidential adviser on the peace process, said the damage from the fighting had been "very contained."

Cruz said most of the damage occurred in the province's hinterland areas "away from the communities ... so the damage is not that big."

In Zamboanga City, a US State Department official said the US would continue to provide development aid to Sulu, particularly for MILF communities, despite the recent outbreak of fighting.

Portia McCollum, the department's deputy director for the Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei, told reporters that the US was in fact looking forward to funding more projects to the war-torn province.

"Absolutely yes. Why should we not?" McCollum said.

She said the US portrays a peaceful settlement to the conflict.

"We hope that the two parties will come together for a peace of finance and we hope that happens soon," she said.

McCollum was visiting with John Dalton, program manager of the Growth for Equity in Mindanao (GEM) and Jocelyn Lozada of the US Aid for International Development (USAID), which is funding the GEM.

3 solar dryers

During her visit, McCollum turned over two solar dryers to farmer NGO rebels in the villages of Talabaan and Tangkil and at least 13 computers with Internet connection in a secondary school in Barangay Maimbung.

Dalton said the arrangement of rebuilding Sulu was not because it occurred after development projects were pouring into the island province.

Roel Sulu, program manager of GEM's Livelihood Enhancement and Peace (LEAP) program, said some of those who joined Abdur Malik, who led the MNLF forces that attacked government troops in Sulu, were beneficiaries of the project.

McCollum said as soon as the conflict in Sulu was settled, the US government would start building more farm-to-market roads, schools and other projects to help the province to develop.

Across the NATION
Assistant Editor Tony Bergonia

7 wounded as kidnap gang avenges members' deaths

LAMBAYONG, Sultan Kudarat—Seven civilians, including three children aged three to 11, were seriously wounded when Pentagon gunmen attacked Barangay Limbalunga here Thursday morning, the military said yesterday.

Col. Ginery Jalandoni, chief of the army's 604th Infantry Brigade, said the attack was in retaliation for the Feb. 26 army offensive in Sultan sa Barongis, Maguindanao that left at least eight Pentagon gang members killed.

"The attackers wanted to avenge the deaths of their comrades that was why they attacked Barangay Poblacion where there's an Army base," Jalandoni told the Inquirer.

He said a still undetermined number of Pentagon gunmen fired several rocket-propelled grenades into an Army base around 10 p.m. but the explosives landed up in residential areas.

One of the rockets exploded at the house of Datu Indjan Bimbalodan, a barrio rebel.

Aside from Bimbalodan, the others injured victims included 35-year-old Rowenda Bawas, and her children Hop Emina, 7, Mashrop Donna, 8, and Fahad Donna, 3.

The two other victims were not to identified as Hilmanchi, 9 and Benjamin, 11.

Elements of the 601st Bde. under Col. Bernardo Maestro have pursued the attackers, engaging them in a brief gunfight near the Lipanang Islands north side of Maguindanao.

No casualty on either side have been reported.

The Pentagon, blamed for various high-profile kidnappings in Central and Southern Mindanao, Maguindanao, the Lanao provinces and the Zamboanga Peninsula, has been the object of military operations in recent days.

Last year, the military also bombed a suspected Pentagon lair in the Lipanang Islands that killed several bandits.

It was launched by former Libertad Mukhod Liberation Front (MILF) leader Datal Mas Ansalani.

—Edwin Fernandez and Agaloy Bordis, PDI Mindanao Bureau

FLOWERS' DOMAIN

Flower-crazy Baguio City and province north of Luzon nurture the reason for the holding of the summer capital's annual flower festival.

BIR informant held on estafa raps cry injustice

By Tarcisio Grejas
PDI Central Luzon Desk

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—A Bureau of Internal Revenue informant in an more than five cases of illegal tax evasion and non-payment of taxes worth P1 billion had been arrested on an estafa case he which he was convicted.

Oscar Timbol, who directly served his complaint to Pampanga Rep. Juan Miguel Arroyo's (GMA) to alleviate program, assisted BIR officials by "totally ignoring" him amid the government's renewed campaign against corruption.

Timbol, 51, said he was arrested by the police's Criminal Investigation and Detection Group in General Santos City last Thursday on a rap provided by a dismissed military official.

He was temporarily placed in the custody of the provincial warden here before he was transferred to the National Bilibid Prisons in Muntinlupa City where he was to serve his term of six to 12 years.

Timbol's arrest came seven years after he engaged in Bureau before 1998 the alleged tax fraud by businessman Rodolfo Jao, a director of the Jacobi Poultry and Development Corp., Pampanga Development Bank and Systems Plus Computer College.

Timbol claimed he worked as administrator of Jao's properties from 1995 to 1998.

In previous interviews, Jao had denied cheating the government of taxes. He claimed that Timbol's exposés were the results of Jao's feud with his brother, Pedro, whom rule Timbol loved.

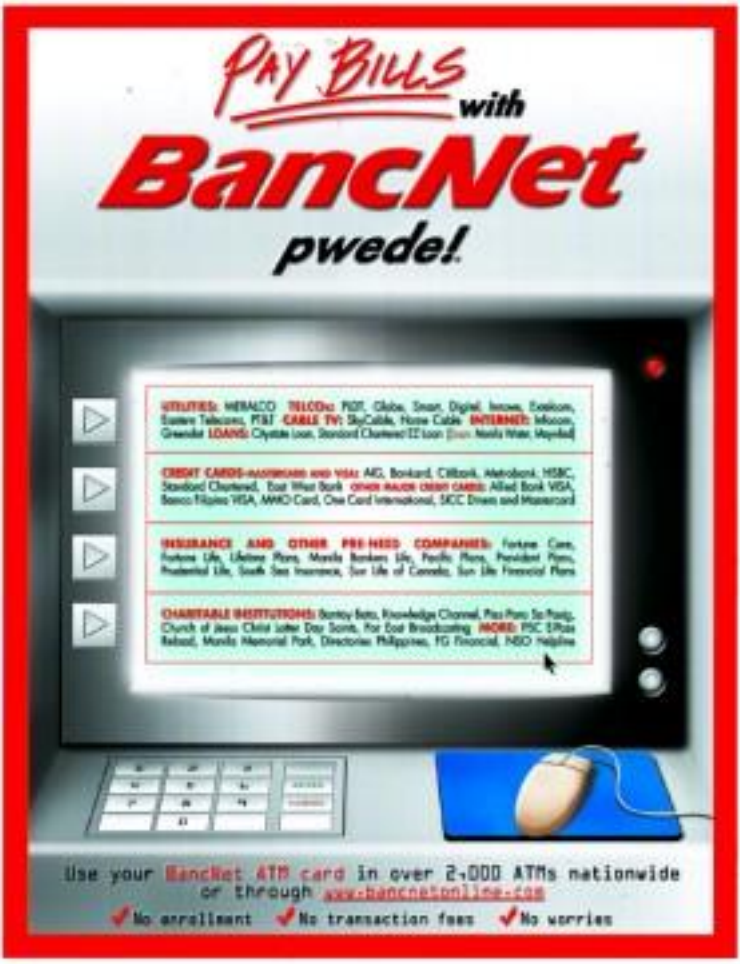
Timbol said he was arrested on an expired warrant for an estafa case he which he claimed he was tried in absentia by a court here.

But even while behind bars now, he appeared bent in calling attention to what he called "malfeasance of the duties and obligations of the chairman and secretary of any campaign for the benefit of the individual government and small taxpayers."

On Friday, he wrote a letter to Arroyo asking that the case be dismissed.

He said the last time he sought the help of President Macapagal-Arroyo was on Jan. 14, 2003.

"But surely the BIR could not just ignore my complaints for the information submitted were indeed substantial," he added.



ROUNDUP

Passports in Hinders

CITY OF CALAMBA—As the first time, the Bacolod Foreign Affairs regional satellite office will issue passports to Western Visayas applicants the passports within one day. Tand then a second will be on May 14, as on March the Office of the Ombudsman here. Many passport applicants are expected to come because it will save them only P500 to P700 to get a passport, which is cheaper from the fees of travel agencies.

Mariano Hinds, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Kalahi cultural services

CITY OF CALAMBA—Assisted from the National Commission on Culture and the Arts came to Calamba Museum to assist the Kalahi cultural services. They met with agencies that will help identify youths with talents in music, performing. A workshop will be held on April 19 in Bacolod, San Pedro's.

Mariano Hinds, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Adopt-a-school launched

CITY OF CALAMBA—The Department of Education and the provincial government have formally launched the Adopt-a-School Program by various village schools of Antonio Maceda Elementary School here. The school had a 1,000 to their Education Secretary Andrew Gonzales. Six groups initially be postings where members go according help. Those who volunteers in teaching and skills training, supplies, computer and science laboratory aids library and books, food, and medicines.

Mariano Hinds, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Police seize hot lumber

CITY OF CALAMBA—An estimated 5,000 board feet of assorted lumber was intercepted by police led by SPO2 Faustino Lee, commander of the Police Community Precinct 1 at the city jail at about 4 a.m. on Wednesday. The police brought the truck to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources office in Barangay Dasay, for investigation. SEE Chief Juan Jose Cruz said another truck was also intercepted with the cargo. "The shipper is a certain Rong Jose Mateo Jesus," said Police Senior Inspector Edwin Fernandez, chief of the Police Station 1 in Calamba. The driver claimed a photocopy via permit with an expired date.

Mariano Hinds, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Suspected robber slain

LA TRINIDAD, Benguet—A suspected member of a robbery gang was killed in a gunfight with police men in Pindapal, Kalinga on Feb. 28. Police identified the slain suspect as Juan Dagsalan, 25, a resident of the Tinoc gang. Chief Supt. Jesus Versoza, Cordillera police director, said the members of the gang, led by Alex Tinoc-gan, were looting coffee, pilfering and robbery charges in Pindapal and nearby towns. Versoza said Dagsalan died while being taken to the Pindapal District Hospital.

Yuri Cosare, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Cop killed in ambush

STA. LUCIA, Ilocos Sur—A policeman was shot and killed by armed men in Barangay Sawmagan here on Thursday. Police said SPO2 Roman Alvero of Santa is at town area driving his car along the national highway when he was ambushed by at least three men at around 6:30 a.m. Alvero, who was assigned to the Intelligence unit of Ilocos Sur police, died instantly.

Leonardo Abalos Jr., PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

SCIENCE/HEALTH

E-mail: [illegible]

Editor Cesar S. Hargonong
Assistant Editor Stella O. Gonzales

Anti-tobacco treaty comes into force

GENEVA—A global treaty aimed at dissuading children from smoking and helping adults kick the habit came into force on Sunday with the United Nations urging it could save millions of lives.

The World Health Organization (WHO) applauded the strong warnings on cigarette packages and the restrictions on tobacco advertising and sponsorship laid down in the the world's first international public health treaty.

"It's more than just a formal documentation of governments' commitment to reduce deaths and illness from tobacco use," said WHO director-general Lee Jong-wook on a statement to mark the event.

The accord aims to reduce tobacco consumption, the number of deaths from tobacco-related illnesses—such as cancer and heart disease—which WHO estimates kill one smoker every 6.5 seconds.

10M annual deaths by 2020

The annual death toll from tobacco-related illnesses—lung cancer, heart attacks and cardiovascular diseases—could soar to 10 million by 2020, with 70 percent of the deaths in developing countries, the WHO said.

The WHO has published 1.2 billion smokers in the world. WHO surveys show that smoking starts among 13- to 15-year-old children are about 20 percent, and health officials fear a disease time bomb for the world's population growth.

The treaty known as the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, gives members three years to slap strong health warnings on tobacco packages and urge the use of language like "low-tar" and "light" and free route to ban all advertising, promotion and sponsorship.

It also recommends tax increases on tobacco products, a crackdown on smuggling, and reducing exposure to environmental smoke.

Ratified by 57 states

The treaty will only enter legal weight in countries which have ratified it, now numbering 57. In total, 167 countries have signed the pact, but have not necessarily said it or published the ratification.

Those which have not yet ratified it include key countries like China and the United States.

A leading expert said the treats, however, needed strengthening if it was to be effective in curbing smoking.

Dr. Derek Yach, the World Health Organization's former anti-tobacco chief who oversaw the drafting of the treaty, hailed the accord as a first step. But he said the treaty lacked what one known as United Nations jargon as "provisions"—additional agreements that complain specific areas of it looms accord.

"The framework sets out protocols is toothless," said Yach.

Yach, now professor of global public health at Yale University said governments, particularly those with slow-moving anti-tobacco policies, need clear guidelines on when exactly they should do.

With the new rules in place, studies suggest the demand for cigarettes should worldly fall 1 percent to 2 percent a year, WHO officials have said.

"No cigarette taxes were discussed for the FCTC, so we do not have a sense of what could interventioning," said Yach. "In a 2 percent decline good news, or should we aim for a 4 percent?"

With the tobacco around in have, said, Feng countries are supposed to enact the reforms. There are no penalties if they fail to do so, but their record will be examined in future UN anti-tobacco conferences, the first of which is scheduled for February 2004. AFP, AP

Smoking bad for your brain

PARIS—Smoking has long been known to cause cancer, heart disease, emphysema and so on. Now, damage to your IQ can be added to the list.

Researchers in Scotland assessed the mental abilities of 460 people who had been enrolled from IQ tests at the age of 11 in 1947. The volunteers were tested again between 2000 and 2001, when they were 64. Roughly half of them were smokers.

Those who had been regular smokers were in five different cognitive tests than both former smokers and those who had never smoked.

"When social and health factors such as education, occupation and childhood intelligence were taken into account, smoking still appeared to contribute to a drop in cognitive function," said the team leader, Dr. Ian Deary, a psychologist reported.

Why smoking could affect cognition shelley is unclear. One possible reason is that, in later life, brain cells are damaged by the free radicals, which could be unleashed by chemicals in tobacco smoke.

The study was led by Lawrence Whalley of the University of Aberdeen. AFP

Putting more fiber into your diet

By Charles E. Bahan

ALL MOST fiber. You're probably heard this a lot of times, but do you know why fiber is good for your health?

Two people understand the importance of dietary fiber, so when Cygel R. D. is suspected he came it has an influence on the way the system works. Based on it, said Dr. Carla Hinds, Consultant urology doctor head of the Digital ng Hospital.

Dietary fiber—found mainly in fruits, vegetables, whole grains and legume beans, peas and lentils—is a substance have become fix its ability to prevent or relieve constipation.

"Fiber may also provide other health benefits, including reducing one's risk of several diseases such as diabetes and heart disease," she added.

Soluble, insoluble

Also includes all parts of plant foods that the body can't digest or absorb and is classified into two categories: insoluble, or those that don't dissolve in water, and soluble.

Insoluble fiber can help promote soft, bulky stools, which prevents regular bowel movements and prevents constipation. Soluble fiber helps prevent insulin spiking rates, and in the process, the sugar in the food is released and absorbed more slowly, contributing to the lowering of blood cholesterol and glucose levels, says Hinds.

Weight control

Eating a high-fiber diet the way of to help control one's weight.

"Since high-fiber foods generally require more chewing time, it gives the body enough time to signal the brain that the body is already full, so one is less likely to overeat," Hinds explained.

Hinds advises those who eat an increased amount of fiber to also drink plenty of water.

One needs to drink over six glasses of water a day when one increases the fiber intake because the body needs extra water to process the additional fiber. Hinds explained.

Hinds also says that too much fiber eaten too quickly can cause inflated gas and abdominal cramping.

"Adding fiber to one's diet should be done gradually over a period of a few weeks to help the digestive system adjust to the change," Hinds says.

Hinds says that with the 90-spine diet dishing around more refined or processed foods—such as fast food, white bread and pasta—people are now taking in less fiber.

"The refining process removes the outer coat from grain, which is rich in fiber content. Similarly, removing the skin from fruits and vegetables decreases their fiber content," she says.

Hinds suggests experimenting with brown rice, or eating more fruits like apples, bananas and oranges, which are good sources of fiber.

Supplements

Some people, however, may need a fiber supplement to decrease their risk of colon cancer, or if they have certain medical conditions, such as irritable bowel syndrome, says Dr. Nina de Guzman, a medical consultant at Pharmed Pharmaceuticals Inc., a distributor of a fiber supplement containing psyllium husk (under the brand Bioconsan).

She says fiber supplements are generally safe although one should not drink a lot of water every day to help them work most effectively.

Jory Soldevilla Jr., marketing director of Metamucil, says psyllium husk offers one of the highest sources of dietary fiber—eight times more soluble fiber and bulk than bran.

Soldevilla: "Psyllium husk gradually does not cause excessive gas and bloating, as advantage over wheat bran and some other fiber supplements."

Attention, International Math Olympiad participants

THE INTERNATIONAL Math Olympiad (IMO) is the most prestigious math test in the world, Ellod Dodd, (mailed inspirational note), a former Philippine team member in the IMO, reports.

I am happy to note, from reading your column, that young Filipinos like Stephen Dy continue to bring honors in the Math field to our country. I also want to express my appreciation to you for bringing math closer to the general reader.

The Philippines first participated in the IMO in 1981, then July 9 to 21. It was the 29th IMO, and it was held in Cavalier, Australia. The first Philippine team was composed of Jerome Klosburying (who also participated in the 30th IMO and got a bronze medal) from Xavier School, Joseph Lucbang, from Ateneo de Manila High School, Dennis Chua from Grace Christian High School, and Guido David and Joseph del Callar, from Philippine Science High School.

They were coached by Dr. Jose Maronilla and The Philippine Team of the University of the Philippines College of Education.

No news

Ateneo Joseph Lucbang got through (to? Callar went to MIT, while Bernie studied college at Ateneo, and Guido an UP (Unfortunately, I have no more news of Ateneo and the two

Josephs now that they graduated from MIT, and of Dennis.

Guido urges me to get his 8th in Math from 210 taught for a while at the UP Math Department, then got his 8th in Applied Math from Texas A&M. If present, he's now biomedical engineering at Texas A & M. It would be nice to hear about the others; through your column, perhaps?

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank and commend Dr. Marasigan for his unwitting efforts in promoting math in the country, for supporting young mathematicians, and for participating in the international competitions like the IMO.

Thank you for your letter. I hope the participants will reach him and keep in touch with our readers.

Fuel alternative

Ferdinand Sadjo (ronnasone@yahoo.com) asks about an article he cached:

I have read several blind (issues in Sept and Oct.) I'm interested in reading more. I would be delighted if you could discuss topics regarding water as fuel alternative which were lost topics before.

There are a lot of inclusive touring water as a potential fuel source, but none of them have commercial valid results to back their contentions.

There have also been rumors of Filipino scientists and inventors working on water as an alternative energy source, but so far nothing concrete has panned out (I may be wrong, however, if anyone has exclusive information, please share it with us.)

Renewable energy

The sun that excites cold now is that it must be still care of the sun, derived renewable energy to women especially in the form of hydroelectric power and ocean (biofuel energy). Ocean currents and winds result from the uneven heating of the earth's surface, with the result produce ocean where energy can be used.

The sun also heats the upper layers of the ocean, which in have raise temperatures that can be harnessed to generate energy.

Hydroelectric power is also by-sailing and is also due to the sun's effects on the earth and ocean. Water evaporates and travels over continents, and falls down again as rain to form rivers, streams and so on, whose energy can be used.

By the way, I am no longer touring by 'bag' act, but thank you for your support.

Unmet need for heart failure treatment

By Rafael R. Castillo, MD

TOKYO—It's always a pleasure to be in this prosperous city and be so warmly welcomed by our Japanese colleagues. It's even more heart-warming to note that despite their highly advanced stature in medical science, technology and research, their relative superiority, has not gone to their heads and turned them into self- arrogant beings.

MEDICAL FILES

Earlier this week, I co-chaired with Prof. Akiko Parker Miyamoto, a scientific forum on advances in heart failure, or HF. Medical leaders from all over had shared clinical information and insights on how they manage HF.

I had two other Filipino cardiologists, Jorge Sison and Dinah Cabahug, as guests privileged to be invited to this meeting which was organized by Takeda, the biggest pharmaceutical company in Japan.

Professor Miyagawa, a renowned cardiologist in HF and director of one of the country's biggest research centers, shared a lot of valuable information, and it was reassuring to learn from him that even in Europe, there are still a lot unmet need in the treatment of HF similar to what we experience in Asia.

HF results from high blood pressure, narrowing of the heart arteries or coronary artery disease, destruction of the heart valves as in rheumatic heart disease, and other causes of weakening of the heart muscles including infection, alcoholism and malnutrition.

Some viral infections may weaken the heart muscles and lead to HF. The hospitals patient experience in overseeing deficiency in the energy intake in the form of minimal physical activity, and later on, even at rest. The patient becomes so invalid in the late stages.

High death rate

Despite advances in the treatment of HF, it still carries a high rate of death and repeated admissions to the hospital. Close to 40 percent of patients will die in six days. More than half will no longer be around in five years. Practically everyone will have some degree of HF in their lifetime.

There is a big need to come up with new

Diuretics which can significantly optimize symptoms of patients suffering from HF

The diameter of HF increases when one develops a heart attack, which may lead to the weakening of the heart muscles. These called systolic dysfunction and the heart usually becomes enlarged (cardiomegaly).

But even patients with normal-sized hearts can experience HF. The hardening of the heart may be strong, but it does not relax as it should during diastole, the heart's resting period in between beats. This is called diastolic dysfunction.

Symptoms

Symptoms may develop insidiously and the HF patient hardly notices them or attributes them to something else. One should suspect heart failure if they have the following signs and symptoms:

- Shortness of breath on exertion or on severe cases, even at rest.
- Difficulty breathing when lying down.
- Nocturnal dyspnea, or waking up at night due to severe shortness of breathing.
- Swelling of the legs due to edema, progressing upward.
- Rapid increase in weight due to water retention.
- Impairment of the tech relax.

Patients must see their doctors when they have any of the symptoms.

Treatment

HF patients are generally advised therapeutic lifestyle modifications, or TLC, which include quitting smoking and excessive alcohol drinking, avoiding strenuous activities and cutting down on salt and water intake.

Medications are also prescribed to get rid of the excess fluid, to improve the pumping function of the heart and to open up the blood vessels to reduce the resistance to blood flow.

We are fortunate to have many effective drugs for HF, such as angiotensin converting enzyme inhibitors, angiotensin receptor blockers and beta blockers. Our colleagues abroad, however, can be double-blinded and it's always best to let the doctor decide which drug is best and at what dose.

These drugs not only can improve the quality of life of HF patients but they also prolong survival.

INQUIRER Visayas

Rio Dome: Cool, cheap housing model

By Carla P. Gomez
Escalante City

SHOW biz personality Rio Diaz Cojuangco's legacy of wanting to help the poor lives on in Negros Occidental's Escalante City in an unusual structure made of earth bags and envisioned to bring down the cost of mass housing and conserve the environment.

Called the "Rio Dome," the egg-shaped prototype in Hacienda Fe looks like an alien dwelling plucked straight out of a science fiction movie. It was built by Rio's nephew, Blas Diaz, 32, head of the MyRadom Foundation, and is supposed to be turned over on Monday by Diaz, Escalante Mayor Santiago Barcelona and Negros Occidental Rep. Evangeline Carmona (first dist., NUP).

"The technology can be replicated to build houses even in tsunami-hit areas," Diaz said.

He said he got up his housing model because his aunt had often talked about how the premiere had given her so much and that if there was anything anyone could do for the Negrenses, it should be done right away.

"My Tita Rio gave me the vision for the work I have gotten involved in," he said. Rio, the wife of Rep. Carlos Cojuangco (fifth dist., NUP), died of cancer last year.

Diaz dedicated the Rio Dome to her "who inspired me to come here and to serve the people of Negros."

"Even though she has passed away, her legacy through small efforts by the Diaz family will continue to benefit the people whom she had loved," Diaz said.

Diaz, the son of Rio's brother Ramon and Sylvana Diaz, is a literature and management graduate of the Ateneo de Manila University and an entrepreneurship graduate of the Asian Institute of Management.

He described himself as a "social entrepreneur who creates sustainable solutions to alleviate poverty." To do this, he said, he had explored innovative solutions to mass housing.

Through the MR Alumni Foundation, he found that Mayor Barcelona had a vision for Escalante and would be receptive to new kinds of innovations.

The prototype house uses mud, packed in rice sacks which are piled up and held by barbwire to create a dome-like structure.

Construction cost

Built on a 42-square-meter lot, the Rio Dome is 20 degrees cooler than an ordinary house, complete with a living area, kitchen, bedroom and bathroom. It cost the city government about P500,000 to put up, but Diaz said the amount could be considerably lower if the project is mass produced.

Diaz explained that the prototype cost was high because he experimented with different construction techniques before developing the earth bag building technique.

Barcelona said a replica of the Rio Dome could not be produced for less than half the cost. Hopefully he said, mass production could further reduce the amount to at least P50,000 per unit.

White wood and galvanized iron roofing had been eliminated as housing materials in the Rio Dome. Diaz gave assurance that the structure was very sturdy and structurally sound.

BLAME Diaz in front of the "Rio Dome" in Escalante City

RENOWNED artist Charlie Co explaining his artwork on the ceiling of the "Rio Dome" in Blas Diaz.

Supervisor needed

He said he had also discovered that concrete could be made from sugarcane waste.

"Sugarcane ash soaked in lime has the same compressive strength as cement," Diaz said. "In a month, we can make strong, durable, earthquake-, water- and fire-resistant structures made of materials that do not have to be bought in stores."

Diaz said he had trained members of the community on how to use the technology for building structures for their homes, water tanks and septic tanks.

"The needs for this is incredible, we can build Lakas with this... small townships so we will not have indigenous problems, roads, fish ponds, rice storage facilities," Diaz said.

Barcelona said the prototype would serve as the tourism center of Escalante.

Renowned Negrense artist Charlie Co painted the ceiling of the house with images from Escalante's history including important workers, the city's reliance on fishing, the people's deep faith in God, and even the tragic Escalante Massacre, in which 20 persons were killed during the dark years of the Marcos dictatorship in the 70s.

> "This technology can be replicated to build houses even in tsunami-hit areas"

REMEMBERING WWII
A skydiver carries the Philippine flag as he descends on Corregidor Island during the commemoration of the island's struggle against Japanese invaders during World War II.

6 DENR execs face ax for logging connivance

PACIFICIAN, Isabela—The Department of Environment and Natural Resources has relieved the environmental chief here and suspended five other officers in Cagayan Valley for issuing fake transport documents to wood transporters.

Adriano Pitogan, DENR Cagayan Valley executive director, relieved Celso Antiza, community environment and natural resources officer-in-charge, in Palanan Mond this reassignment order.

Suspended for 90 days were Ronnie Bay Briones and Jerry Jumangit, both of Llanes-Nagtajan; and Gimel Montes, Jerry Benjamin and Benjamin Segura Jr., all of Cauayan-Magsaysay in Isabela.

Pitogan said the five Llanes-based officers issued transport documents of wood products intercepted in Sto. Domingo, Cagayan, and in mid-Ilocos Norte.

Antiza, who was temporarily detailed at the DENR-Cagayan Valley regional office in-charge division, was replaced by forestry operation Arnold Pangasian.

Pitogan said Antiza was liable for command responsibility on logging permit San Mariano and Ilagan issues.

He, however, said the investigation cleared three more cases of evidence to show that reports connected with the two suspended foresters.

"I can assure no existing or being done now is to ensure a clean up of rotting workers in our agency. I am not a tolerant and do not have been regularly done, especially in San Mariano town," Pitogan told the business.

Environment officials in the region are guarding the forests amid reports of rampant logging by illegal loggers who are believed to have been supported by some environment officials.

But Delfin Tugaba, provincial environment and natural resources officer, said there is no illegal logging in San Mariano.

He said a series of operations netted at least 6,000 board feet of ordered-out wood products in the town this week.

"Only timber poaching is being monitored. Besides, we are now intensifying our operations to enforce the environmental laws," he said.

Members of the Diocese of Ilagan Multisectoral Action Group for Environmental Protection in San Mariano earlier assailed environment officials for being "unscrupulous and greedy in abusing the environment, especially the remaining portions of the virgin forests in San Mariano and neighboring areas." Villamor Funa Jr., PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Use of insecticides killing honey trade in Abra farming town

BOLIDEN, Abra—Honey yield in this town has dropped by at least 70 percent due to the use of insecticides in mango orchards, a local official said.

Alcester Perez, municipal planning and development officer, said insecticides sprayed into the town's mango trees have killed honey-producing bees.

"When honeybees come to suppress from the flowers of mango trees [sprayed with insecticides], they die by scores. In their hives I become they get poisoned and die," he said.

"Using chemical spray on mangoes has decreased honeybees over the settlements. Wants gathered now have to travel farther to find beehives," he said.

Perez, however, said the decline in the number of beehives in the town has helped the tourist hotels in town because there were fewer incidents of honey bees swelling from unintended beehits.

Beehives

Gathered here said they build beehives forwards bees so the smoke would drive away the bees and allow them to harvest honey.

"One good thing about the decrease in the number of beehives is our hotels are protected from fire," he said.

Perez said gatherers used to look for the tiny honeycomb, which could be found only on the tall trees, because this could be sold at a higher price. "Slow honey is more expensive," he said.

He said honey gathering is not forbidden in the community but local ordinances on forest fires are enforced.

Lizzet is a century-old system of replanting the area of natural resources among the upland. Suggestion center in Abra.

"We do not prohibit it [honey gathering] but people are advised to be very careful in cutting forest trees. The fine would depend on the damage done. The person found violating the law could be asked to buildozer a dog or a caraboo," Perez said.

Peak season

He said the peak season for honey gathering is from January to April. He said honey gathered in November last year easily spoiled because there were no need such as mangoes.

Here chat honey usually comes from the nectar of many flowers, Perez said. Arthur Mira Paredes, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Moms told not to leave daughters to male kin

KEMPHOUSE CITY—The increasing number of rapes involving family members in North Cotabato has prompted the social welfare office to caution mothers against entrusting their female children "to your husbands or any older male members of the family" when they leave their homes.

Dada Rimando, provincial social welfare officer, said mothers should "be very, very careful."

At least 9 of the 27 cases of abuse against women and children recorded in December last year were incestuous.

It was noted that most of the victims come from the indigenous communities.

"We are not supposed to leave our little girls under the care of our husbands, or adult male children, as one way of protecting them against abuses," she said.

Rimando said that most often than not, abuses against little girls by family members happen when the mother is away—leaving the victim and the perpetrator all by themselves at home.

She said that part of the responsibility of mothers is to make sure that their children, especially the girls who are vulnerable to abuses, are safe.

"We don't have more especially if our husbands or our older male children are into drugs or alcohol. These substances can twist the mind of anybody ... These substances can bring out the devil in anybody," Rimando said.

The latest case of rape committed by a family member was discovered by the provincial Crisis Intervention Center in Magpet town.

The girl was allegedly raped by his elder brother.

But the CIC said the girl's mother was reluctant to file charges against the son, who would be the family breadwinner. Jeffrey Espino, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Only ₱350M available for sugar producers

By Carla P. Gomez
PDI Negros Bureau

BACOLOD CITY—Sugar producers could only get P350 million of the P6 to P7.5 billion it had hoped to borrow from the Land Bank of the Philippines for their sugar cleaning house.

President Macapagal-Arroyo on Wednesday revealed that the amount was the most that the Land Bank could lend the sugar producers because they could not come up with the equity for a multi-billion loan package.

Leaders of the sugar industry, however, said they were not giving up on their plan to set up the cleaning house that would ensure stable prices for sugar and would assist with LBP president Margarito Teves' plans to sell or capitalize the help of other banks.

At a press conference at Hacienda Fernandez in La Carlota City on Wednesday, the Pres. dent said the purpose of the loan was not the problem but the credit-worthiness of the borrower.

"If borrower has to be credit-worthy and there are certain tests of their credit-worthiness in standard banking practices. One of them is the debt to equity ratio—if they were to borrow from private bank, they would be required a debt-equity ratio of 75-25. Land Bank has been trying to be as liberal as possible and requires a debt-to-equity ratio of 90 to 10," she said.

But Ms Arroyo said she was informed by Teves that the sugar producers would not even comply with the 90 to 10 ratio.

"I asked Gary how much can you lend because, in the past, Land Bank almost collapsed because of behest loans and we don't want that to happen again, and he said, given their debt to equity ratio, the most we can loan them is about P350 million," Arroyo said.

The President, however, said that Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap had informed her that with P350 million, a lot could already be done to help the sugar industry.

Yap, in a separate press conference Wednesday, explained that the National Food Authority was able to hold sugar prices with a P200-million fund.

"If the LBP lends the sugar producers, P350 million plus the NFA stabilize fund, that would do a lot to help the industries," he said, and "the P6 billion may not be necessary."

Reynaldo Ramirez, president of the Confederation of Sugar Producers Associations, said they would not be asking against the President the decision of LBP on the land thread; done a lot in propping the sugar industry.

Army says it exhumed bodies of NPA victims

By Joh Bolan
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

LEGAZPI CITY—The military exhumed three bodies buried in a mass grave of suspected New People's Army victims in Barangay Sinpayungan, Malilipot, Albay Thursday afternoon.

Col. Antonio Aruejo, commander of the 901st Infantry Brigade of the Philippine Army, said they received information that there were 11 graves in the area.

The mass grave is situated in the tri-boundary of Malilipot and Polangui towns of Albay and Buhi in Camarines Sur.

Aruejo added that his men had only discovered three remains but they were still conducting search and recovery operations to retrieve the reported total number of the buried bodies.

Aruejo identified one of the victims as Ramon Madridejos, a fisherman from Polangui, who reported missing since 2002.

He was identified by his relatives, through the pair of pants he was wearing.

Aruejo said the military would file multiple murder charges against the rebels operating in the area but did not identify who would be charged.

The information was tipped off to the elements of the Army Engineering Brigade who constructed school buildings in the village.

The surveillance on the possible graveyard yielded positive results during the turnover ceremony of the project.

The school building was turned over by the Army to the Department of Education, represented by Lee Bonachita, Malilipot district supervisor and Mayor Emily Kare.

The graveyard is located near the new school building.

Aruejo appealed to the public to report to the military if they have family members or relatives who are missing, or had been abducted, for identification of the remaining unclaimed corpses.

FACES
A woman and her children enjoy one of the activities during the Panagbenga Festival in Baguio City—face painting.

Cops link extortion with plan to burn mall

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—Police said they were analyzing extortion as the possible motive behind Tuesday's attempt to burn the Gaisano Grand Commercial Center, the biggest shopping mall here.

Police have recovered three modified cellular phones, which were packed with suspected incendiary powder, tucked in some display at SCC's garments section.

A calendar had alerted authorities about a bid timed in the said section.

Chief Supt. Antonio Silliores, Gensan's top police director, told reporters here that they would talk with Jiry Chang, owner of SCC Mall, to find out if he received extortion letters prior to the attempt.

Aside from the extortion angle, the police were also looking into a possible link between the arsonist at SCC and the Valentine's Day explosion near the Gaisano Mall here.

Abu Sayyaf spokesperson Abu Sulayman said his group was behind the Valentine's Day attack that also hit Davao City and Makati.

Silliores said as of yesterday no suspect has been identified yet.

In March 2000, the SCC Mall was burned after similar incident destroyed several other malls here.

The Abu Sayyaf later owned up the arson. —Apollo Jovin, PDI Mindanao Bureau

METRO

EZ2 25 2 | SUERTRES 1 6 8 | FOUR DIGIT 3 2 0 1 (1st draw) | MEGALOTTO 6/45 1 9 18 32 35 P12,262,643.40 | SWEEPSTAKES 2 8 3 2 1 6 P100,000.00

Mapua may get to keep its name on paper after all

By Alexis Pupa

MAPUA may be able to keep its name after all.

The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and somehow the Mapua Institute of Technology is keeping its name in school administrators had apparently dropped plans to change it to Polytechnic College.

Dr. Rolando dela Rosa, CHED chair, told the Inquirer that MIT president Dr. Reynaldo Vea on our CHED Retirement Capital Project Director Dr. Aquilo Bajuyo that the school would continue to use the name Mapua Institute of Technology in its record with the CHED as well as official documents and student records.

Dela Rosa said Vea's letter also said the Secretary and Exchange Commission approved the amendment in their corporate name of the school to Mapua College, Inc. but with the stipulation that it was operating under the name Mapua Institute of Technology.

"It is explicitly stated [in Dr. Vea's letter] that they will continue to use the name Mapua Institute of Technology in all official documents. Records with one of the will also be under Mapua Institute of Technology. And they will use Mapua in all their advertisements and announcements to the public," Dela Rosa said.

The 80-year-old school, founded by Don Tomas Mapua, is well-known for its engineering and architecture programs, with many of its graduates topping licensure examinations. The school was purchased by the Yuchengco Group of Companies, which has company in insurance, banking and real estate, On July 31, it was announced that Mapua's name would be changed to Malayan University. Vea said this was part of the school's objective to gain university status. The old name would also come only in the College of Engineering and Architecture. Mapua students had opposed the plan, and held regular protest actions, resulting in the suspension of several students.

Roldan's wife accuses 10 cops of theft

By D.J. Yap

THREE days came to take him away on charges of kidnapping for ransom, Dennis Roldan's accusing officers also carried away his car, cellular phones and jewelry.

Roldan's wife, Mrs. Teresa Gonzalez, made these allegations on Thursday, in a complaint before the Quezon City prosecutor's office in the arrested 10 police and Criminal Investigation Division (CIDG) agents of car theft, robbery, grave threats among other charges.

All, save one, a former Congressman, Roldan, attached Top Gumabon, are visible as a suspect in the kidnapping of a 3-year-old Quezon Village boy in Pasig City. The boy was rescued by police later. Two other suspects had linked him to the crime.

Mrs. Roldan identified the three agents as Police Supt. Jaime Bautista; Police Senior Inspectors Arthur Asuncion, Ali Jose Dubario, Joseph Blaze Ballong, Ramon Dominguez and Jessel Guadalupe; PO3 Herman Cuspoc; PO2 Marcos Montilla, PO2 Eddy Montecio, and PO2 Clarence Prado.

On the morning of Roldan's arrest on Feb. 25, Mr. Teresa said she woke up to a loud noise as heavily armed men barged into their home in Kipanrist II, Quezon City. She then roused Roldan, and then fled from the room with two kids in the bathroom, one of them.

A man was already in the bedroom before she was able to shout to the others outside that the door was open. The man in dark clothes, a black vest, and a helmet pointed a high-powered gun at them and told them to leave the bathroom, she said.

The armed men, pointing to Roldan, asked her if he was her husband. When she answered yes, the men asked what was his name. Ms. Teresa answered: "Hindi siya ang sabi ko. Sabi niya ako 'yun? Bakit hindi niya kilala? Mga CIDG ba?"

During this time, Roldan had his hands cuffed behind his back with his head bowed, and was blindfolded with packing tape, said Ms. Teresa. Roldan's mouth was also plastered with packing tape, she added.

During the commotion, Roldan's wife said she noticed that their brother, another, destroyed two steps and cellular phones worth more than P100,000, and one Rolex watch worth half a million pesos were gone. As the men dragged Roldan out of the house, Ms. Teresa said she kept asking who the men were, who was their leader, and where they were bringing him.

But no one answered, she said. Later, they asked for her husband's cellphone, and when she handed it to them, she noticed that her husband was gone. Then she, a light blue Toyota Corolla with plate number PKT 455, Ms. Teresa said, was also gone. Roldan's wife said she did not know that the men were police officers, and had reported the incident to the Barangay Hills Police as an abduction case. The agents were also charged with robbery, alleged to have taken one ring, eight pieces of jewelry, a Rolex watch and an undisclosed amount of cash.

Repeated calls to Bautista and the three group for comment were not immediately returned.

SUZETTE Wong (center) answers questions from reporters in the eye of a storm.

A day of blunders and drama at Roldan preliminary probe

By Armand N. Nocum

IT WAS a much-hyped-up hearing that involved Dennis Roldan, a popular actor and former congressman, but the presence of Senator (RGS) lawyers appearing for the witnesses caught the crowd off-guard and made the case.

Yesterday, witnesses of one of the alleged beneficiaries of Roldan, a suspect in the kidnapping of a 3-year-old boy, with some others, asked the SGO to inhibit itself from presiding with the preliminary investigation.

Two all-star Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez or television star Vic Sotto, the accused are guilty in the highest degree of the DOJ, he should refrain from talking or voicing defensively prejudicial to the accused," said Alvine Talvenzano, former chief-of-staff Romeo Dongcil.

Dongcil, along with other kidnapping suspects Arturo Pacheco, Rodolfo Reed Jun Andres, Rowena Ann Andres, Genesis Gaores, Adrian Dominguez and Ernesto Wong, Roldan's alleged girlfriend, appeared at the DOJ for a preliminary investigation of the kidnapping of Kirk Lim, 3, and Kevin Wong, 4, in Quezon City.

Roldan, Mitchell Sy Gaudalupe and Mr. did not appear yesterday because he had already been charged with the offense before the Pasig Regional Trial Court (Case "Homicide").

"Although we have on hand all our corroborating [with], Gonzalez should be "impartial."

Earlier, Gonzales said there were strong evidence to pin down Roldan and the seven other suspects in the kidnapping of the boy on Feb. 8. Police also said Roldan was known to have lived beyond his means, and had lost heavily in a Las Vegas casino, several years ago he claimed.

Asst. Prosecutors Z. Dalde C. Buenaventura and Prosecutor Leah Tuguinay said Roldan's arrest (Dalde) but not being enrolled in the Witness Protection Program (to remain prominent in the case. For sure, copies of the complaint, and affidavits of witnesses and other documents were not sent to Wong, who earlier charged "Flaming" in the kidnapping charges that filed against Roldan. Pasig's lawyer, Wilfredo de Ungria, had used this occasion as a chance to submit his client's counter-affidavit at a later date.

Omissions

Buenaventura admitted that DOJ personnel "inadvertently" failed to include the documents in the subpoenas sent to Wong, but added that such omissions were "part of the process. (But) I would happen during the preliminary investigation."

Wong showed up yesterday to deny accusations that she had ordered the kidnapping. She appeared in the session, together with Armin Fu, the mother of the kidnap victim, and reportedly a good friend of Suzette.

"I was visiting in Ariola. I don't think we should have such orders to cause anything like that happened," she told reporters.

"As subordinated a supplemental affidavit stating that she met Wong, with her co-child, on Dec. 18 in SM, Quezon City.

"She was on board a white (Honda) CRV, the plate number of which I could not recall. My son's name, Rhodel Emmanuel, who was with him on that day of the abduction, said that was the same kind of car used by the kidnappers when they kidnapped my child," she said in her affidavit.

She recalled that Wong had told her that her view car was given to her by Roldan.

All of the accused, except for Roldan, have yet to be formally charged in court for the offense.

Fake bills gang suspects nabbed

By Margaux C. Deria

THE NATIONAL Bureau of Investigation (NBI) has arrested two suspects who were caught with computer and printing equipment, and fake peso bills in Valenzuela City last Tuesday.

Rodolfo Jalapasan, of Blk. 1206 Bonifacio St., Concord V, De Leon, Valenzuela City, and Arlene Pedrajas, of Blk. 3511 Int. 10, Bonifacio St., Malia, Pasig, Manila, were arrested last Tuesday in their homes.

Arlene's husband Dhenar de Pedrajas, the alleged leader of the syndicate involved in the manufacture of bogus peso bills, is believed to be being somewhere in Quezon City or Cavite, according to barrio officials.

The suspects, nabbed at Mac 2004 during a raid at their rented house on Urra. T de Leon Street in Valenzuela, were previously released for lack of sufficient evidence.

Seized in the raid were fake bills in P100, P200 and P500 denominations, two sets of computer and computer, HP 1010 printers and Canon color scanners, stamps bearing the faces of people in Philippine currency, bottles of ink, paint, a special white paper supposed from Australia, and an ultraviolet light machine.

The equipment are worth around P100,000.

Investigation also uncovered a pen used to make fluorescent markers in the currency that show up under ultraviolet light.

METROBRIEFS

War vs drugs on

THE PDEA to add on. To add Las Piñas City police asset Francisco Santos, camouflaged this city's vast network of drug-related smuggling and illegal drugs. For the past two months. The activities conducted 25 operations and seized 1.9 other kilos of methamphetamine, according to an anonymous source. Santos was arrested in Metro Manila Agustin. The city...

BEN. ELIZ MEDC Lim cuts the ceremonial ribbon as the launching of a photo exhibit highlighting the Filipino-Chinese intellectuals in La Salle Greenhills. With Senator Lim are Tan Tiong Bieng, vice president of the Filipino-Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industries Inc. (left) and Brother Bernie Oca, La Salle Greenhills president.

Senate 'betrays' House

ON TARGET

Ricardo Taglis

THE WORD war between the House of Representatives and the Senate is rendered by advocates of the unicameral system of government.

They want the senate to go away and find in a showdown, they say, between two bodies will cancel each other out.

Under the unicameral system, there will only be one legislative body that is countless where there is unicameral system, the chief executive or prime minister is elected by his peers in the parliament.

What caused the quarrel between the Senate and the Lower House?

The Senate passed the House-approved P907.36-billion national budget but the Senate did the unthinkable, in the eyes of the House: it sent the proposed national budget directly to Malacañang without having it pass through the bicameral conference.

The bicameral conference or "bicam," composed of selected members of the House and the Senate, reconciles conflicting provisions of bills approved by both houses of Congress. It is considered the "third and most powerful" legislative body.

Hours-reading between senators and congressmen in the approval of bills of national import take place in the bicam.

The bicam, apparently in response to popular clamor on the pork barrel allocation of every member from P50 million to P40 million. The Senate did the same thing, saving pork barrel allocation from P50 million to P1.25 million.

But more congressman experts of that the P76 billion pork barrel allocation would be restored once the budget is signed by President Arroyo.

In other words, what the House did was a betrayal—in the eyes of the House.

Sen. Ramon Bong Revilla Jr. has called on his fellow legislators in the Senate and the House of Representatives to "commit mass suicide."

All of you colleagues agree to face call for a floor-fight, on one condition: she should do it first.

In short, this is the kind of legislators that we have: flippant and playful like little children.

In the little, little, Davao General Gov. Ms. Elena Pelaez (LP), in vehement in illegal logging in Davao to see in an hearing.

The latest report on illegal logging at the mouth of the mountains of Bagacay and Calinan town connected to the barrio of a senior officials from tribal chieftain Ernesto M. Lantion.

Lantion, vice chair of the Council of Elder Leaders of Calinan, Davao Oriental, and chair of the Calinan Mandaya Tribe Inc. and Barangay Tribal Chieftain of Mabini, Calinan, said there was massive cutting down of trees in the mountains of Calinan.

She said she noticed about 6 when she came across logs of a thousand tree species in commercial quantities which were billed in Pengbuhid Creek in her regional barangay.

When she complained, she was told that the cutting down of trees was ordered by Vice Mayor Jessie de Abella.

And who is Abella? She is a protege of Odilon Cua.

Abella, according to my sources in the province, dominates the Las Palmas Gils in the illegal logging activities in Calinan and Bagacay.

Will the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) please investigate Lantion's allegations?

BUSINESS

Editor Raul G. Marvels
Assistant Editor Carola S. Mariano

Inflation rose to 8.5% in February

Gov't expecting lower Q1 growth

THE NATIONAL Economic and Development Authority said it was expecting economic growth to slow down in the first quarter due to weaker farm output.

"We are even less optimistic for the first quarter. The GDP (gross domestic product) may be problematic because there is the effect of El Niño, and planting has been delayed," Economic Planning Secretary and Socio-Unsyog General Romulo Neri said in an interview with reporters after his speech during the annual membership meeting of the Philippine Economic Society yesterday.

Neri said planting of rice and corn had been delayed by lack of rain due to the 62 to-day weather pattern that started in December last year and which is likely to last until the second quarter.

He declined to give a specific GDP growth estimate for the first quarter estimate of the GDP growth for the first quarter, but said the figure would be lower than the average growth of 6.1 percent in 2004. GDP is the sum of goods and services produced in an economy in a given period.

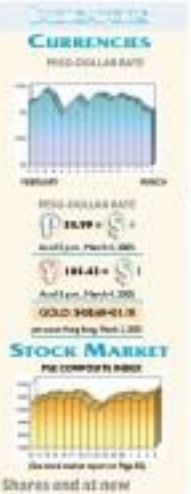
The agriculture sector, which accounts for a fifth of the GDP, is expected to resume lean production decline, which started in the last quarter of 2004, in the second quarter.

In the last quarter of 2004, agriculture growth went down to only 1.3 percent compared with the average of 4.8 percent for the entire 2004.

However, Neri said the services sector, another main driver of economic growth, was expected to be "vigorous" in the first quarter, somehow easing the impact of the decline in agricultural growth. The services sector covers businesses related to the booming business process outsourcing (BPO).

Despite the slowdown in the first quarter, the country's chief economist said the government would stick to its full-year GDP growth target of 5.5 to 6.5 percent for 2005.

GEW V. SU



(See stock market report on Page B3)

Shares end at new 5-yr high

SHARES yesterday closed at some two-year highs, reversing from initial weakness as foreign funds scuttled to those concerned about slips

set by Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co.

The 30-company Philippine Stock Exchange Index advanced 21.41 points, or 1.3 percent, to 2,134.88, breaching its fourth-day resistance to end at its highest level since the 2,160.15 close on Jan. 9, 2000. The index gained 74.56 points Thursday.

The broader All Shares Index rose 9.77 points to 1,194.07 after declining Thursday by 3.43 points to 1,184.27.

Gainers beat losers 68 to 42, with 40 issues unchanged.

The stock market started weak, with liquidity being squeezed off by investors trying to secure funds from the initial public offerings of Manila Water Co. and SM Investments Corp., which together could raise around P11 billion.

Metrobank Bank & Trust Co. declined 2.7 percent to P58 after it announced a plan to issue as many as 250 million shares for stock rights offer. AP

By Michelle V. Reyes

THE INFLATION rate, or the rate of consumer price increases, in February rose to 8.5 percent largely due to sharp hikes in transport fares and in the costs of several food items.

The 8.5 percent year-on-year inflation in February, which used 2000 as the base year, was higher than the 8.4 percent recorded in the previous month.

"The February rate reflected a hangover from the high inflation rate in the second half of last year," Economic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri, who is also the director general of the National Economic and Development Authority (Nedo), said in an interview with reporters.

The Nedo chief also said inflation was expected to remain at a relatively high level in the first few months of the year because the inflation during the early part of 2004 provided a low base in the computation of the increases in prices.

In February 2004, the inflation rate was only 4 percent. For the whole of the first quarter last year, inflation averaged at only 4.1 percent.

In its inflation report released yesterday, the National Statistics Office said prices of products belonging to the food, beverage and tobacco category (FBT) rose by 7.6 percent last month, compared with 7.4 percent in January. For food alone, inflation rose to 7.8 percent from 7.6 percent. Higher inflation was also recorded in the prices of rice, 4.8 percent in February from 4.3 percent in January; cereal preparations, 9.7 percent from 9.1 percent; dairy products, 12.7 percent from 10.4 percent; fish, 9.2 percent from 9.0 percent; and miscellaneous foods, 6.1 percent from 6.0 percent.

In the meantime, core prices increased at a slower pace of 11.5 percent from 12.4 percent, eggs, 4.2 percent from 5.5 percent; fruits and vegetables, 8.4 percent from 9.7 percent, and meat, 8.8 percent from 9.7 percent.

The NSO also reported an increase in the cost of housing and repair to 4.1 percent in February from 4.2 percent in

MICHELLE V. REYES

DOTC reports higher cargo, passenger volumes in '04

By Clarissa S. Santos

FOREIGN and domestic flights that took off and landed at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport recorded 114,000 in the first 11 months of 2004, according to the transportation department.

Transportation Secretary Leandro Mendoza said the substantial increase in the number of flights at the NAIA, despite repeated threats of terrorism, helped boost local tourism.

"The air transportation sector is optimistic that there will be greater air traffic this year because of improved economic conditions," Mendoza said.

International flights to and from the NAIA reached 42,316 in the first 11 months of last year, 10.7 percent higher compared with the previous year. In the same time, domestic flights went up 7 percent to 71,827 during the same period, according to Mendoza.

Foreign flights carried 20 percent more passengers last year or 7.6 million, while domestic passengers rose 18 percent to 6.15 million.

"The increase in international and domestic air traffic may be attributed to the increased confidence of air travelers and the airline industry in the commercial and tourism potentials of the Philippines after recovery from the effects of the 2002 epidemic," Mendoza said.

As the number of flights increased, the collection of airport auxiliary fees also went up.

The Manila International Airport Authority, operator of the base, grew its profits last year by 183 percent to P650.4 million from P230.9 million in 2003.

MIAA general manager Alfonso Cusi credited the agency's efficiency, cost cutting and higher collection of fees for the substantial gain. He said the agency contributed around P1.1 billion to the national treasury in the form of taxes and dividends in 2004.

The transport chief said that the Mactan-Cebu International Airport Authority also improved its gross revenue by 10.87 percent to P656.5 million last year from P592.35 million in 2003.

The Cebu airport authority registered P226.18 million in profits against P175.85 million in 2003.

In its unaudited financial report presented to Congress, the MIAA's operating expenses dropped 12.7 percent to P2.7 billion last year, after security measures were set in place.

On the other hand, gross operating income went up almost 8 percent to P3.6 billion in 2004. Cusi said the higher gross income was due to higher revenue from nonaeronautical fees and passenger service charges.

Cusi said the increase in the number of international and domestic flights was even boosted by a higher foreign exchange rate in 2004.

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

Notice is hereby given to the public that on 09 October 2004, the directors and stockholders of the Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Lungsod (Arnaldo University), Inc. (the "Corporation") approved the increase of the Corporation's Authorized Capital Stock from Ten Million Pesos (Php10,000,000.00) to Three Hundred Million Pesos (Php300,000,000.00) and the issuance of Seventy Million (10,000,000) new shares. On the same date, the directors and stockholders of the Corporation approved the subsequent reduction in the par value per share from Ten Pesos (Php10.00) to Four Pesos (Php4.00), thereby increasing the capital stock from Three Hundred Million Pesos (Php300,000,000.00) to One Hundred Twenty Million (Php120,000,000.00). The purpose of the reduction in par value is to raise par the deficit of the Corporation.

Gov't should focus on family trades, not SMEs, says study

By Russell W. Dionisio

JAMESTOWN businesses should be given greater access to loans and government support due to their enormous potential in contributing to economic growth, unlike start-up businesses which benefit more from current funding programs.

This was one of the recommendations based on the results of a study conducted by PSBC Research International. The Thames International Business School and accounting and consultancy firm Punongbayan & Araullo sponsored the study.

Jaime Noel J. Santos, Thames BS director, on Thursday said during a press briefing that financing start-up companies posed greater risk for lending institutions.

"We believe in the power of family businesses as engines of economic growth," Santos said. "Owners of such businesses are more committed and more dedicated because [at stake] are not just businesses!... but a person or a family's reputation."

Based on interviews with business owners, lenders—especially government funding agencies—are wary of family enterprises because of the perception that family and business matters are not separated, Santos said.

"This is a problem of policy," he said. "Based on our findings, owners of family businesses in the country are very conscious of the need to ... separate family and business issues."

The study, conducted between July 2004 and January 2005, involved 215 respondents from Metro Manila, most of whom were engaged in the manufacturing sector.

Santos said the study also found that owner-managers were generally open-minded about involving family members and relatives in their businesses, as well as getting professional managers to join their organization.

"Ironically, the respondents were most worried about divesting (or separating from) their spouses," he said.

The respondents' greatest worries are, possible disagreements with their business partners that their business could end up in trouble, especially since all their wealth are invested in it, and that their children who join the business may not perform well.

Ochoiella, there are also the top concerns among business owners, although the order varies," Santos explained.

He said local entrepreneurs were not as concerned about the size of their operations compared to their Western counterparts.

"It's an Asian thing," Santos explained. "Asian parents usually think of their businesses as something they would pass on to their children. In the Western business owners, they are more concerned about the value of their businesses because buying and selling companies are more prevalent in their countries."

According to Department of Trade and Industry officials, the government is stepping up efforts to support small and medium-sized enterprises, which make up the bulk of all businesses in the country.

If Union show that SB Corp., a government financial institution, has, since 1991, extended a total of P21.3 billion in SME credit assistance, P13.5 billion is allocable lending programs, and P8.8 billion in credit guarantees.

Smell but terrible

BREAKTIME

Comrades R. Bansal III

BIG ASK now reveals that the small but terrible Sen. Johnny Ashley has a strong sense of smell.

According to the recent headline grabbing rant the good senator made when he talked about the 18 percent rights offering of San Miguel, Johnny smelled something fishy.

Sure, everybody may be excited about the offering, including the stock market, because, for one, it signals the return of a little activism to the notorious capital markets.

But apparently, Johnny sniffed the nastiness of this new administration of Cojangco-Soriano-San Miguel board, and found them excited about the same offering.

To Johnny, those insiders were "duty-bound to prevent the worst, or at least get instructions on how they should vote."

Instead, the insiders approved the offering. That's why Johnny did not want to like the rights offering's ... well, odor.

* * *

BUSINESSES, anyway, people think of all sorts of stupid things that are designed to protect people who put hard-earned cash in stocks.

One of them is a thing called "fiduciary responsibility." This has nothing to do with living things under water, or eating seafood.

It only means, for the sake of stories woman from Cavite and Pampanga, that board directors have the obligation to serve all its stockholders. Again, I said "ALL!"

Imagine what will happen if directors in listed companies like San Miguel only look after the interest of those who elected them to the board.

We all know that the "majority" stockholders of listed companies use and do elect the entire board.

So I take it therefore, if we were to take the joke from our dear senator seriously, those directors must only serve the interests of the majority stockholders?

Correct me, Sharp government statisticians to the San Miguel board have the duty to protect the interest of ALL stockholders... not just the interest of this cute administration, believe me, they are not always one and the same.

For instance, San Miguel is always in the habit of making money while this cute administration, the people money like anything. Look, ma, more killer issues!

* * *

ANYWAY, just take a look at the line-up of government nominees to the San Miguel board, such as veteran banker SW Espiritu, or Hernando Jimenez, the former president of OMA-?.

Do you mean to tell me those guys don't take a bath, and an Asker thinks they have to use deodorant or remover their fishy smell?

By implication, Asker's malodorous rant tells us that, by approving the offering, either the San Miguel management corrupted these guys, or they were simply stupid.

Here's a little advice: Don't ever call those two guys either corrupt or stupid, because people who really know them will kill you.

Precisely, in old hands in the corporate arena, those nominees know they have the obligation—even legally, bind—to all the stockholders.

Thinking people as they are, they cannot act in any corporate board in mere puppets of anybody in the PCGG, or even the Senate, for that matter.

* * *

TO THINK that board directors only serve the interest of those who elected them, to me, is quite a narrow way of looking at things.

It is always what is good and not good—all right, BAD...for the company. This is the only way to serve all the stockholders. It is not by snapping every move of management that will allow the stockholders to make more money.

In the case of San Miguel, indeed, the government is one of the stockholders. It claims to own 27 percent of the company, for and in behalf of overseas farmers.

Other government outfits also invested in the company like San Miguel holdings of both GSIS and SSS members. The government is just running funds. Their officials make a lot of money on the process.

Now, when it comes to these holdings in San Miguel, based on the nominal jobs, it's as if the interest of the government is against the interest of the other stockholders of the company.

Correct me if I think I'm always right, but I think the interest of stockholders, whether government or not, is for the company to make money for them. Hey San Miguel's a business!

* * *

AND SO the question to ask is this: Is the rights offering good for the stockholders or not?

As an indication, the price of San Miguel shares in the stock market has been going up...despite the supposed "smell" that Asker smelled.

The stock market, with all its silly players and well-informed fund managers, must like something in San Miguel, even the stock rights offering.

Look, belief, that offering will raise money for the company's expansion. And, of course, we all know what expansion means. It means more profits later.

In fact, I think that those directors who were accused of having horrible smell, did this cute administration a favor by voting for the rights offering.

The proceeds will put San Miguel on track to an expansion drive never before seen in this country—in this throne, or in any other previous lifetimes.

It is positioning itself as a leader in the region in the food business. That's why the company is not one bit on real estate. It is concentrating on something it knows how to do... food.

I guess what? Even this game from Filipino multinational San Miguel needs money for expansion. Well, nothing comes free.

I am not sure if current farmers, who own the 27 percent in San Miguel that the PCGG, et. "representa," will not be happy if San Miguel makes more money.

But I'm sure that all the other stockholders will be happy.

Let me see if I got this right. You mean, boss, what is good for all the other stockholders, even to not necessarily good for one stockholder called the government? Is that it?

* * *

MAYBE Asker was worried about what the media reported as "dilution" of the government interest in San Miguel due to the rights offering.

This financially-challenged cute administration reportedly does not have the money to maintain our the 18 percent rights offering.

It only has the money to waste on other business ventures like Napocor. Or even pour-ven ventures like Congress!

Anyway, even considering that the government does not take up its share in the rights offering and its shares go down by 9 percent, it will still be the owner of a much bigger San Miguel which, thanks to the expansion, will likely take in more profits.

In other words, the government earnings from the supposedly "diluted" holdings may be even much more than its earnings from the present "undiluted" holdings. And that is the thing that is fake?

* * *

FOR THE SAKE of some congressmen and senators, plus PCGG officials, it is also among stock market investors that the shares in the rights offering are treasury shares.

For the sake of senior guys in the Senate, "treasury shares" used to be outstanding shares, already issued out by the company, but then they were bought back by the same company. They are not new shares.

If San Miguel is not issuing new shares for the rights offering, what freaking "dilution" are they talking about?

Everybody in the stock market knows that, in 1999, San Miguel bought back its shares. The market was doing bad, while San Miguel was doing great. Thus, at those low prices, the San Miguel shares were conspicuously cheap.

And so, San Miguel was able to buy back 18 percent of the outstanding shares. Because of the "next retirement" of these shares, all the stockholders gained their interest by a corresponding 38 percent at that time.

There you have it—through the rights offering, San Miguel is only bringing back the treasury shares into the market. Well, at a handsome profit for San Miguel, of course, and thus the stockholders, including this cute administration.

The holdings of the stockholders, thus, are simply back to where they were in 1999 before the buy-back.

I mean, if this cute administration doesn't take up its share in the offering, by holdings return to the level before the buy-back.

Quick, somebody please tell me where the freaking dilution is!

* * *

I'LL LET YOU in on a couple of little secrets:

One, it's the best of hopes is coming in holdings in San Miguel by another 9 percent, by buying in the market, which will entitle it to flow to another board seat.

Two, Henry Sy Sr., who built these All malls from scratch, is also raising his group's holdings in San Miguel.

If the rights offering is bad for the company, do you think they are crazy enough to keep on raising their holdings? Maybe. But then again Asker may just have a terribly funny sense of smell.

Sun Cellular raises 24/7 plan rate to ₱350/mo.

By Cielito S. Bedno

SUN Cellular yesterday said it would launch new unlimited plans by the middle of the month.

The new schemes, it said, would allow its more than 1.2 million subscribers to text all they want within the network for as low as ₱50 for seven days and ₱150 for one month.

However, Sun Cellular also announced it would be increasing the rate of its 24/7 buffet voice and text plans to ₱350 a month from ₱250. The increase will take effect on March 14.

Also, its ₱150 unlimited call and text rate for 30 days would apply only to seven days starting the same date.

Sun Cellular's buffet pricing applies on top of existing subscription plans.

William Bustamante, senior vice president of Digital Telecommunications Phils. Inc. said they were realigning the costs of its plans to cater to the specific demands of different types of consumers.

In the coming months, Sun Cellular will be offering buffet plans exclusively for unlimited voice calls or texts.

"The increase in rates for the unlimited call and text will enable Sun to expand its network footprint in terms of coverage and capacity to make the service available to more people," said Bustamante.

Sun Cellular is the trade name of Digital Mobile Phils. Inc., a unit of telecompany-owned Digitel.

This year, Sun Cellular is expanding its coverage and capacity by increasing its cellular sites to about 2,000 from the existing 1,300. Bustamante said the company had been building an average of two cellular sites a day.

In the meantime, Globe Telecom Inc.'s Touch Mobile brand will start offering new north a promo that will allow unlimited voice and text for ₱100 for five 30 days and ₱50 for unlimited text for 5-day recap of current plans.

"Since our competitor has copied our strategy, that completes against 24/7 we were motivated to," according to Bustamante.

Pilipino Telephone Corp. claimed that out of 100 calls, Sun Cellular connects successfully only 30 calls on the first attempt. Pilcorp said Sun Cellular had also been earning 24/7 calls after 15 minutes. It related that Sun Cellular's service standards met the benchmarks set by the National Telecommunications Commission.

Innova gets BOI perks

By Ramon FM. Dumalaga

THE BOARD of Investments yesterday said it had approved tax incentives and other perks for Toyota Motor Philippines Corp.'s ₱1.45 billion diesel vehicle project.

The Innova, classified as a pioneer hybrid vehicle, was registered as a new basic model on June 1, 2004 under Executive Order No. 156.

EO 156 provides a comprehensive industrial policy and directives for the Motor Vehicle Development Program, in which TMPC is a registered participant for the assembly of commercial vehicles and passenger cars.

Trade Secretary Juan D. Ilarro said pursuant to the program supported the previous administration's 13-point agenda and the new Medium Term Philippine Development Plan on strengthening and sustaining the country's global competitiveness and creating 10 million jobs.

Ilarro said that TMPC's Innova project was expected to create 1,203 new jobs. The Innova is the second model in Toyota's new IMV (vehicle strategy for innovative, multi-purpose vehicle) platform and replaces the Revo series. The first IMV model is the new Hilux pick-up.

Trade Undersecretary Elmer C. Hernandez, who is also BOI managing head, said the board approved the registration of the project on Dec. 15. TPC's commitment to strengthen its operations here to help make the country a regional auto supply base.

"The parts and development program that TMPC will implement shows an overall program for localization within the model life of Innova," Hernandez said.

He added that TMPC committed to source 22 percent of its total number of Innova parts from local suppliers.

In its application for the registration of the project with the , TMPC said the Innova would have a carrying capacity of eight, "a new body style with larger body size and advanced design, and new advanced interior and exterior features."

Gov't expecting . . .

(Continued from B1)

He said the economy was expected to rebound after fully absorbing all the investments which were now in the pipeline, particularly those intended for the mining sector.

The government considers the recent Supreme Court decision opening the local mining industry to foreign investors as key to spurring investment into the country.

The official said investments in infrastructure projects that were slated for the year would also push the economy upward in the second half.

Earlier, Ilarro said the Palma had approved the construction of several infrastructure projects for the year. These include the ₱57 billion Subic-Clark-Tarlac Expressway Project, the ₱27 billion North Rail Project, and the ₱10 billion rehabilitation of the South Luzon Expressway and the Tagaytay-Nasugbu Road.

He said the government was targeting about ₱200 billion investments in infrastructure projects to offset the medium-term goal of increasing the country's infrastructure spending to GDP ratio from 2.6 percent in 2003 to 4.2 percent by 2010. Rochelle V. Bayan

BUSINESS

SMC to push through with stocks offer

SAN MIGUEL Corp., the country's largest food and beverage firm, yesterday said that there was no legal stumbling block to stop it from holding a P17.6-billion stock rights offering next week.

In its disclosure yesterday, San Miguel said it was pushing through with its plan to issue 295 million additional shares, a move that would also bring it closer to its goal of becoming one of Asia's top 100 firms.

San Miguel said in its disclosure that there was no case filed by San Miguel chair Eduardo Cojuangco, Jr. or any other party which might affect the rights offer.

San Miguel was reacting to an Inquirer story where a Palace official was quoted as saying that San Miguel's court, eight days after might not push through due to a pending court case filed by Cojuangco. The SMC chair allegedly disputed the government's claim on operation of the sequestered shares in the food and beverage giant.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said in a briefing that the matter was still in the hands of the Supreme Court.

Ermita later admitted that he was not aware whether SMC brought the case before the high court after the Sandiganbayan made a final decision.

San Miguel officials said the share ownership dispute had not been elevated to the SC and had been kept with the Sandiganbayan.

San Miguel yesterday also said that the offer period would start on May 13. —Khattleen L. Sanchez

BSP: Pinoys apt to spend more in Q1

By Doris C. Dumlao

FILIPINO consumers are becoming less bearish on the economy and household conditions, and are likely to spend more this quarter, according to a Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas survey.

In its consumer expectations survey conducted among 1,104 households in Metro Manila from Jan. 27 to Feb. 2, the diffusion index (DI) remained negative at -44.2 percent in the first quarter, but it was an improvement from the -51.1 percent DI posted in the previous quarter.

The DI is the percentage share of respondents that answered in the affirmative—minus that the number of respondents that answered in the negative—in a given indicator. A negative DI would then indicate a bearish view versus encouraging confidence levels.

The households with negative expectations cited insufficient income and higher expenditures as reasons, the BSP yesterday said in its report.

On the other hand, those that had a positive outlook anticipated increases in economic and economic factors, wages and employment.

Households with the lowest monthly income of less than P5,000 were the most pessimistic, with a DI of -51.1 percent, while those with the highest monthly income of P75,000 and above were the most optimistic with a DI of 7.3 percent.

"It could be observed that the DI improved as the household income level of respondents increased," the BSP said. "For all income levels, however, the households were least optimistic about the economic condition of the country and most optimistic about their family income."

But despite the negative outlook indices, the same survey showed that Filipino consumers were most optimistic in purchasing items for the first quarter, with the buying conditions index rising to 34.2 percent in the first quarter from 20.4 percent in the previous survey.

Over the next 12 months, the survey indicated that about three out of 10 households intended to buy a house and/or lot, consumer durable or motor vehicle.

Overall consumer outlook is also expected to improve further in the second quarter as the DI eased at -30.4 percent from -39.9 in the fourth quarter of 2004.

RICE, RICE BABY

FILIPINO dock workers unload bags of repacked rice imported from Vietnam at Manila's south harbor. The Philippines, one of Asia's largest rice importers, bought 500,000 tons of rice from Vietnamese suppliers in January. Pakistani suppliers are also expected to win the bulk of the 995,000 tons which Manila sought in a tender on Tuesday. AFP/TED

DTI bent on tapping $5B/year Saudi market

By Roland W. Dantoga

TRADE Secretary Juan D. Ponce Enrile is urging local businessmen to work with their Saudi Arabian counterparts to avail himself a pact that would enable the Philippines to penetrate the Middle East country's $5-billion-a-year halal food market.

Enrile made the call in time with the visit of representatives from the Council of Saudi Chambers of Commerce and Industry early this week who came over to further develop commercial ties between the two countries.

"A bilateral cooperation on halal is a win-win situation for both countries," Enrile said. "Muslim countries in South Arabia can readily avail themselves of authentic Halal food, while Filipino exporters are enabled to capture a sizeable share of the Saudi market."

Halal is an Arabic word that generally means "permissible." In relation to consumables, the word refers to products that Muslims are allowed to take, eat and drink, according to Islam.

There are millions of Muslims worldwide, the global halal food market averages close to $150 billion a year.

Enrile said the DTI had taken steps to make easier the production and export of halal products. It has recently launched a campaign to turn Southern Mindanao into a halal food production area.

Last month a halal-certifying group said Philippine halal food exports were expected to double this year to about $100 million, in the wake of the Asian tsunami last December.

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

TURNAROUND PERFORMANCE

Bacnotan nets ₱4.1B in 2004

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

BACNOTAN Consolidated Industries Inc. (BCI) posted an income of ₱4.1 billion in 2004, a turnaround from net loss of ₱565 million in 2003, mainly due to the sale of its interest in Union Cement Holdings Corp.

In its financial report to the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), BCI said it gained ₱2.6 billion from the sale last year of its 21.3-percent stake in UCHC to Aetos Holdings Inc.

UCHC owns 60 percent of Union Cement Corp., one of the country's leading cement companies.

The divestment allowed BCI to pay off all its long-term debt obligations and drastically cuts non-investment areas, largely in the services sector.

BCI has ventured into the telecommunication sector after it acquired 70.6 percent or controlling interest in Asiabic University Inc., a university in Cabanatuan City (Nueva Ecija).

AU has 6,000 students and has recently undergone a ₱84-million upgrade of its facilities.

BCI is also eyeing investments in affordable housing and financial services.

Last year, BCI's losses from operations were trimmed to ₱25.2 million from ₱702.6 million the previous year.

BCI added that last year's performance was buoyed by lower financial charges resulting from the reduction of its loan obligations, significant profits from Union Galvanized Corp., and income contribution from AU.

BCI owns 89.9 percent of Union Galvanized.

Bacnotan Industrial Park Corp. and Bacnotan Steel Industries Inc. continued to post losses, although lower levels compared with 2003.

BCI owns 60 percent of Bacnotan Industrial Park.

Demand for steel roofing and other steel products slowed down last year due in part to bad weather conditions in Luzon and cuts in the budget for government projects in the Visayas-Mindanao area, BCI said.

Despite the decline in volume, net income of Union Galvanized increased more than threefold to ₱139 million last year from ₱33 million, on the back of favorable prices and lower production costs.

Bacnotan Steel Industries, on the other hand, remains under receivership. It is awaiting for the approval of the rehabilitation plan filed by its respective receivers as October last year.

Bacnotan Industrial Park, on the other hand, posted a net loss year of ₱10.6 million, an improvement from ₱19.6 million in 2003.

French trade minister leads delegation to RP

FRANCOIS Loos, French trade minister delegate for foreign trade, will be in the Philippines on March 9-11 to explore business opportunities.

Loos will be accompanied by a delegation of about 20 French businessmen gathered by the French Business Confederation (Mouvement des Entreprises de France).

The delegation is led by Jacques Lefevre, vice president of Lafarge, the biggest French industrial by-Philippines.

Loos will have several high level meetings with officials of the Philippine government and the Asian Development Bank, as well as local businessmen.

There are about 100 French companies or companies with French participation in the Philippines. They represent a cumulative investment of about $1.6 billion and provide about 6,000 jobs. They are found in varied fields:

- Engineering (diluted in the telecommunications sector, oil, mines, Aeros and Tunnels in the power sector);
- Industry (Lafarge holds more than one-third of the cement market, the Legrade is a major supplier of industrial gases, Essilor manufactures glass-lenses in two large plants);
- Petroleum products (Total);
- Insurance (AXA).

LOOS

- Automotive (Airbus, Eurocopter).
- Cosmetics (Elitrell).
- Pharmaceuticals (Sanofi-Aventis).

according to French official figures, the bilateral trade in 2004 amounted to 767 million euro (P1 billion).

French exports, from mainly on electronic components, telecommunications equipment, and pharmaceuticals.

Philippines imports to France are mainly electronic components and information technology equipment and garments.

Brainstorming of the exchanges, topics talk to the food and consumer goods sector, is expected to be future.

France is the 9th biggest direct investor and the 6th biggest bilateral donor from 1992-2003.

DISCLOSURES

BACNOTAN Consolidated Industries Inc. declared a special cash dividend of ₱0.1 share to those of shareholders of record as of March 15 and will be payable on April 30.

* * *

ASIAN Terminals Inc. scheduled its annual stockholders' meeting for April 28 with record date on March 28.

* * *

PHILIPPINE Seal Co. declared a stock dividend of ₱1.333 billion in favor of stockholders of record as of Feb. 28 and will be payable on March 14.

* * *

MOVIE (Philippines) Rebel Corp. will hold its stockholders' meeting on June 10, 4 p.m. at the Manila Pavilion Hotel, Ermita, Manila. Stockholders of record as of May 20 will be entitled to vote during the meeting.

* * *

PHILFIST Chemicals Inc., a subsidiary of International Container Terminal Services Inc., was dissolved. It never had commercial operations after its incorporation but for the waste management services of Philippine Ports Authority in 2002.

* * *

A. SORIANO Corp. 's 50 million shares were bought by its wholly owned subsidiary, Anscor Consolidated Corp.

* * *

MAHIANO Sumcons II resigned as director and corporate secretary of Mindanao Portage Inc. Inc.

Compiled by Marian D. Tolosa, PSE Research

Inflation rose ...

From page B1

the previous month. Manufacturing firms also shoot up to 3.1 percent from 2.4 percent.

The inflation rate for fuel, light and water slowed down to 26.7 percent from 28.1 percent. Similarly, inflation for services decelerated to 11.1 percent from 11.6 percent. That for clothing remained at the previous month's level of 5.5 percent.

Also, core inflation was expected to be seen in the second half of the year.

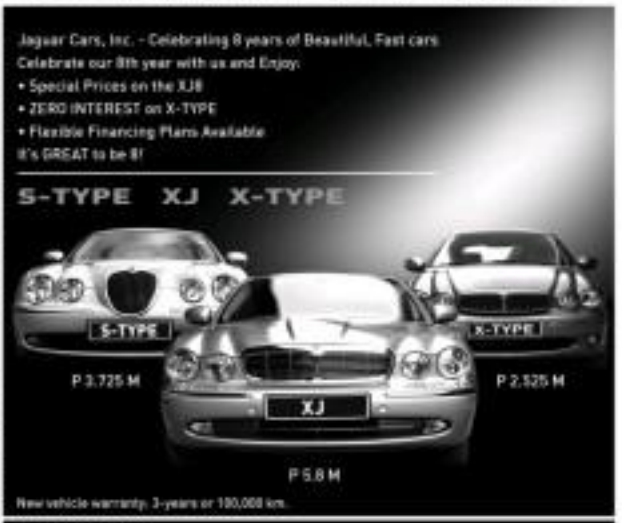
"The expected slowdown in average inflation by the middle of the year will be backed by the continued foreign investor confidence in Philippine equity and bond markets," he said, showing optimism that inflation for the full year of 2005 will be within the government's target of 5 to 6 percent.

However, it frowns expect and the annual bank had raised investments for average inflation this year to 6.7 to 8 percent from 6.4-6.5 percent last year.

"They reflected policy intervention," Jose Guinigundo, senior central bank governor, told reporters.

He added that with policy intervention, inflation this year might still come in at the government's target of 5.5-6.5 percent.

The country's chief economic planner, however, said there were serious inflation risks this year. These include the continued volatility of oil prices in the world market, the occurrence of El Niño, and pressures coming from the wage increases.



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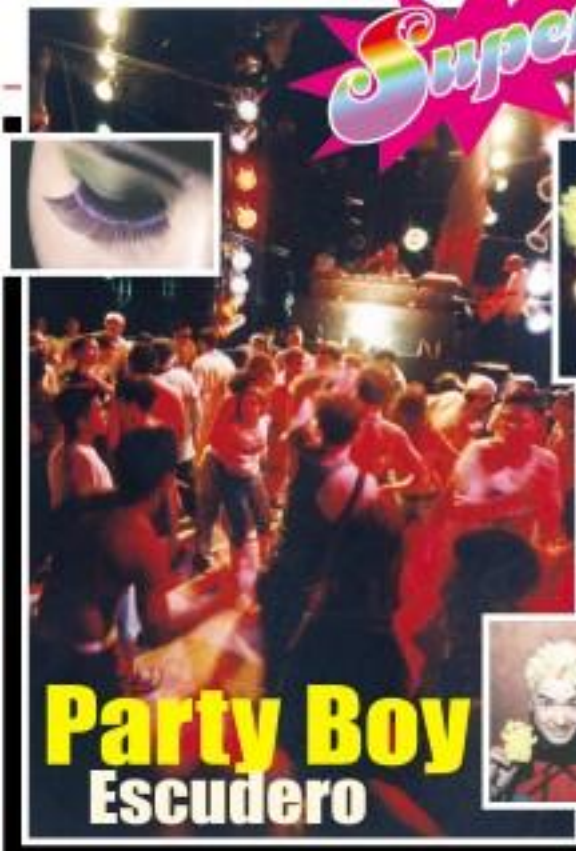
pop culture . entertainment . recreation



Party Boy Escudero

Images from the archives of Eddie Boy Escudero

Tim Yap

MY ENTRY into the party scene started with Eddie Boy Escudero.

Before I got to go dazzle any dance club, his party-iconic snapshots accompanied by Gary Levinas's nomadic tunes was the deadening world was the last incarnation you would I would eventually inhabit and call my own.

More than a decade has passed and Eddie Boy still cocktails the public with his imagery of youth in wild abandon, party girls, pretty boys, the cougar pleased, the tattooed, the good, the bad and the ugly—all who become beautiful in front of Eddie Boy's lens.

His eye for delicious detail and its evocative micro-zeitgeist are both the glass and the gaze—a keen sense and awareness.

Every hip, young, sexy, irreverent, famous, notorious, party hopping, jell-popping person in Manila must have been swiped by Eddie Boy's camera—the one and only visual chronicler of the city's ever-evolving nightscape.

For him, it's about the human body, emotion—the personal moment—manners, magnetism, bliss, perpetual motion, pumping music, pumping muscles, unending sexuality—Eddie Boy-style.

Make you high

"Bold it! Unless that poor!" You'll hear him scream from across the room and you'll have no choice but to obey. Once Eddie Boy puts you in his spell, you become a willing slave. Elicit A wave of hypnotic flash blinds your sight and frenzies strangers and space his next party.

Finders the previous grey metaphor is really gone beyond that. Eddie Boy energizes the party scene with his presence as much as the party scene energizes him. It's a symbiotic love-hate relationship that will last more than a lifetime, as there images evocate the story of our generation.

The best part is, Eddie Boy Escudero has not touched anything intoxicating in ages—he shoots on a sober note, and comes out with images that will make you high.

When not shooting inebriated souls, Eddie Boy does wedding photography—as capturing the essence of celebrations is really his forte—a party being a bonding moment between two or more souls, anyway. His upcoming Silver Lets Gallery exhibit, "When We Danced, opening this Tuesday, is long overdue. I hope he scores one-which is knock-out.

Time for's dance to that.

Party Boy Escudero

Eddie Boy chronicles the city's ever-evolving nightscape

Super

pop culture . entertainment . recreation

Career View Mirror

Do you find yourself cross-eyed at the career crossroads?

Dear Man About Town,

My parents have always wanted me to become a lawyer. My grandfather was a partner in a small law firm, and my father followed in his footsteps and took over the firm. It seemed the logical step for me to do this lifestyle, and so I enrolled the University with the hopes of finishing with an appropriate degree in Law. I am now halfway done with my studies (and doing well).

The problem is, I don't think I want to be a lawyer anymore. I have nothing against the legal profession, but there are other things I want to do with my life. My father threatened to cut off my financial support if I ever gave up Law. Even if he is bluffing, I know that this will break his heart. I also understand that my family owes its standard of living to the benefits that have come from a lucrative legal profession, and my father's sacrifices, so I feel bound to fulfill his wishes—but at the expense of my happiness? What should I do?

Man about town

Chuck Dy

SEVERAL years ago, a prominent athletic footwear brand (I think it was Puma) embarked on a far-reaching marketing campaign. In their print ads, they juxtaposed several stars from different athletic galaxies as they MIGHT have been had they chosen alternate lifestyles. One of my favorites was of Dennis Bergkamp, a legend of football (soccer) who was dubbed the Dutch Master for his exquisite orchestral skill, posed in a ridiculously quaint traditional costume complete with lime tights and clogs, and carrying a pail of churned milk. The caption deadpanned: "Dennis Bergkamp, Cheese Maker."

While it is not to say he wouldn't have prospered as an exceptionally talented Cheese Maker if he had so desired, in an alternate universe, he might have been the designer of duty, the King Kong of kraft, the Cheezus Christ. But it would be difficult, almost painful, to imagine this reality bereft of his mesmerizing talents on a football field. Imagine Donald Trump as a librarian, Oi Yeh Aquino as an astronaut. It would have happened. But those people made their choices long ago, and we, the public, suffer the rewards and consequences of their actions.

The problem with choice is that you have to make one. We're not discussing those frivolous dilemmas we solve ourselves with as preliminary answers, grunting then a nod-

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Career View Mirror

From page C3

ieum of illusory importance in half-hearted attempts to infuse some excitement into our daily lives. Onions or capers? Wow! Boxers or jockeys? Tough one! "The Buzz" or "S-Files?" That isn't even a real choice, just different rooms in the same cheap motel in Hell.

See you at the crossroads

Real choices exist in trifaceral dimensions: they possess a sense of urgency, their consequential patterns are generally obscured, and they affect lives.

So you're standing on a career crossroad even before you've graduated. The lawns of a legal profession seem less than verdant now, and it haunts you to imagine that the grass may be greener in a Law-less frontier. Unfortunately, you don't have the luxury of time, being sandwiched at the midpoint of a competitive and, I imagine, expensive education. You've got to make a decision soon, before more dinero and dignity is consumed, before it's too late to back out—because if you do wait, you may feel obliged to stick it out, simply because you've gone this far.

The truth of the matter is, the emphasis on urgency should not lie on this premise. It is imperative that you consider a course of action as soon as possible NOT because the cement of your future is about to permanently set, but because it becomes a bitch and a half to change the direction of your road once it does dry. As Led Zeppelin once sang, you can ALWAYS change the road you're on. I know people who have made career changes well into their fifties. Doctors who have forsaken medicine for photography, bankers who quit finance for the culinary arts, and accountants who closed their books and foraged into the excitement of... real estate. Unless your current job title is Volunteer Coordinator for Religious Zealots With Dynamite, there will most likely be opportunities down the road to take an exit.

But it does become more difficult the longer you procrastinate. For one thing, there exists the danger of complacency. The longer an organism is exposed to a certain environment, the easier it is for it to accept its lot in life as a natural state. This is true of abusive relationships, ingrown toenails and jobs. Factor in the inevitable commitments of family and finances, plus the expected wear-and-tear of an aging human body, multiplied by the onset of cynicism and possible dementia, and we've got an equation that insists on expedient action.

Of course, there is no assurance that satisfaction will follow once you pursue your dream career, which brings us to the second aspect of a Real choice: the obscurity of consequence. If the contestant knew beforehand that inside the *kahon* was a bunch of bananas, he'll take the *kwatro* option every time—but that wouldn't be much of a game show, now would it?

While it is ideal to do work in an industry and environment you are passionate about, this does not necessarily mean you're automatically a happy camper. The old adage is that we should always follow our heart. Unfortunately, hearts rarely have any brains (think of your last romance), so in essence, we are following morons. Well-intentioned morons, but morons nonetheless. So let's say you give up a career in Law for a shot at being the lead in Rhenaissance, which you've dreamed about ever since you were a young tyke in La Salle Greenhills. There you are, prancing in tights to the haunting melody of an Irish lute, considering how you're going to pay this month's rent and why your old classmates have stopped asking you to Friday night poker.

Whatever decision you come to, someone is not going to be satisfied. The third characteristic of the Real choice is that it affects lives. The ripples of your professional pebble will reverberate across the pond of your life. Without a doubt, your father will be upset if you choose a different career path. He may even sever his financial support as threatened. And yes, that is as bad as it sounds.

But the primary life you should be concerned about is your own. How will this decision affect you? Is this really what you want out of life? Is it viable enough to sustain a standard of living? Will your children respect you? A father gets angry when his children do things which he feels will not be good for them—like God when he smote the Israelites for worshipping heathen idols. If you are able to convince yourself that the career you want is in your best interest, you will be able to convince your father. Perhaps not immediately, but eventually.

Work to live

The luckiest people alive are those who have either worked out or stumbled upon the winning lottery numbers to a satisfying career lifestyle. If you love what you do, it is called a PASSION. If it is work in an industry that is morally admired, it is called a VOCATION (if you were born into luxury and have no need for work, it is a VACATION). If you enjoy your work, then you are LIVING. If you enjoy your work AND get paid handsomely for it, then you are LIVING IT UP! If you love your work, AND it is socially accepted, AND it fattens up your bank account, AND it is morally admired... give me your phone number.

In conclusion, it is best for you to take a weekend away from family and school, apart from the distraction and pressure of normal life, somewhere remote like Alabang Hills. Imagine what your life might be like if you were to pursue your chosen career. Fantasize about the rewards, but likewise consider the consequences. If you open your eyes and you're still smiling, then it's a good bet that's what you should be doing. And if it's porn... give me your phone number.

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